

Acts 17_pt2

by Bill Gallatin

God uses circumstances to bring people to Himself, and it is through the gospel and Jesus Christ that we can expose deception and bring people to God.

Duration: 1:00:47

Scripture: Genesis 22:2, Deuteronomy 7:25-26, Acts 17:27-28, 1 Corinthians 10:14

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the unity and harmony that will be experienced in the kingdom age. He highlights that God has a special plan and purpose for each individual, and that no one is inferior or superior to another. The preacher also discusses the accuracy of the Bible and reads a passage from Deuteronomy that speaks about driving out idolaters. Additionally, he mentions the impending destruction of the universe, but assures the audience that God will bring believers into His presence to dwell with Him forever and receive new bodies. The sermon concludes with the idea that everyday tasks can be acts of worship if dedicated to God.

Transcript

My ways are not your ways, nor are my thoughts as your thoughts. And so many times we're wondering, Lord, why are you allowing this? Why is this happening in my life, this difficulty? Why are you forcing a change in my life that I can't control? It seems as though, Lord, you haven't left the choice up to me. The circumstances are out of my control, and it's forcing a change that I wouldn't make on my own, in normal circumstances.

And we see this in Paul, happening in his persecution, and the trouble that's stirred up. And here God is using it, though, to force him to the greatest university city of the world, Athens. Now you remember, Greece had changed the whole world.

Its culture, its educational systems, its philosophy. The two major philosophic bents of the day were the Stoics and the Epicureans, and we'll touch on that. All the great minds of the world were in Athens, Greece.

It was the university center of the world at the time, the cultural center of the world. And so, through circumstances, Paul is sent there. Now Paul, it's interesting, here the great apostle, Paul, was very comfortable in small villages, out-of-the-way places.

He didn't need big cities, big auditoriums, big crowds. Because he knew that God could touch one person, and that one person can do so much. And so, maybe, without God using the providence this way, he never would have gone to Athens.

Now, we know later he desired to go to Rome, because he heard that the church had been started there. And he wanted to go there to strengthen and encourage the saints, but as we find out in the book of Acts, he didn't get to Rome the way he thought he normally would either. He got a free ride, but it wasn't the ride he would pick, or the journey.

But here we are in Athens now, in the cultural, educational center of the world at the time. And here's this brilliant mind, Paul, ready to meet with the Stoics and the Epicureans in Athens, Greece. And it's interesting, as we come to the end of the chapter, we'll see that a great multitude of the intellectuals didn't respond to him.

They kind of mocked him. They certainly wanted to debate, because in that particular time, all that people lived to do was to debate. The university students just loved to get on a topic or a subject and debate the different viewpoints.

They'd spend a whole day in this kind of a thing. That's what they lived for. We know that it was given over to idolatry.

Here, this mighty Grecian culture that affected the architecture and the education, the language of the whole world. In fact, it was the dominant language of the world at that time. A very colorful, descriptive language, far superior to any other language.

And it's interesting that God began to work the gospel there. And when he brought the most accurate text of the New Testament, it was through the Greek language, the Textus Receptus. Far superior to anything else.

We know that it's stated that if you went to Greece, particularly Athens, there were more gods than there were humans. On every street corner, there was a statue representing a god. Or a temple.

And the thing that was so amazing, the reason it captivated the people, they were deeply religious and devout. But it was the beauty. I mean, the architectural and the skill of the artisans to make these statues out of marble and these magnificent temples.

And many of them were solid gold and silver. And it would just dazzle you. And it would be hard-pressed to think that there could be satanic.

It's just too beautiful. Or how anybody could come in and say, well, this can't be satanic or devious. I mean, these people are so devoted and that they have such beauty in their culture.

This can't be evil or wrong. It's interesting how clever Satan is to use beauty to deceive somebody. And so it would be difficult to withstand that, you see.

Very, very religious. But very pantheistic. And so they, that conducted Paul, brought him into Athens.

And receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed. So he got there ahead of them as the riot, you remember, started in Berea. As Thessalonians found out that Paul was there and went looking for him.

And after him, they stirred up the trouble. And God used that to force Paul to get to Athens. Because if he'd had the response again, he'd have probably spent more time than God wanted him to in Berea, setting up home Bible studies and planting churches and laying hands on people that he knew that God had touched that could be there.

And so Paul, you know, would have stayed, you know, to really make sure things are really getting established. And so God forced him. But he wanted help.

Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him. He just, he just inside just began to turn as he began to look at this magnificent city. One of the most magnificent cultural centers on earth.

The university, the greatest university of the world at that time was in Athens. With the greatest minds. University student, you know, from all over the world.

But absolutely idolatrous and blinded by Satan. As intelligent as they were. As magnificent as their buildings were.

As deeply religious as they were. As beautiful as everything was. It was all corrupt.

It was all satanic. And they were trapped in it and didn't realize it. They were overwhelmed by their own beauty.

It's interesting when Isaiah prophesies the fall of Lucifer. And he speaks of his pride and he's going to be like the most high and sit on the sides of the north. And then later on Ezekiel picks it up, the Holy Spirit of God.

Several centuries later gives us a little more insight on Satan. It says, your own beauty has corrupted you. They fell in love with their abilities.

It trapped them. And he was stirred inside. He saw the whole city, or the city, wholly given to idolatry.

So, you see, you can have a brilliant mind. And that won't protect you from the deception of Satan. Remember, the most perfect mind that any human being ever had fell in the garden.

And as we've touched on before, he wasn't from a dysfunctional family. He didn't have some kind of a syndrome. He had the most perfect mind that you could ever think of.

Without sin. Absolutely innocent with the total brain capacity that God designed the first Adam to have. And no human being has had that power of a brain, with the exception of Jesus Christ, who became flesh to walk in our midst since then.

No one. Because as soon as Adam fell, remember, there's DNA and genetic damage from sin. And immediately it's into the DNA in the chromosome, and it's passed on to the offspring.

In each generation, the damage increases. It gets more locked in the race. And so the slightest little glitch in the following generation becomes a bigger glitch.

And then it can pass on and change the facial features of a whole group of people as they get locked into a certain area with certain weaknesses. And each generation, as it goes on, you see, the damage is more locked in, more locked in, and the brain has less and less capacity. And then you add on top of that no

relationship with God, and all of a sudden you start resorting to drugs and alcohol and more brain damage.

And so what happens, you have a human race that really are damaged people. And they establish systems and different levels of, we're better than you, we're more intelligent, we're a greater race down here. But as God's way up here in heaven looking, we're all still so damaged down here at this lower level.

Functioning in a lower level, all much lower than God's beauty, but comparing ourselves with each other. And so here they are given to such idolatry, and at that time the Greeks were the greatest, but they were so deceived. Wholly given to idolatry.

Now, the more a person is given over to idolatry, the more it proves that they have no real relationship with the living God. The more someone has to resort to something material, or other than just that personal invisible relationship with the living God, just does nothing but prove that the person doesn't have a real relationship. They need something around the neck or in the pocket, in the wallet, on the dashboard, or in their fingers all the time to remind them that there's a God.

When in reality, when you know the true and the living God in a real way, you need nothing. I know that I'm alive because my heart is beating. I'm aware of it in there.

I don't need to have a picture hanging around my neck of a heart that there's a heart. I don't have to keep carrying something in my wallet and say, yes, I've got a heart, and it's alive. Or put a statue with a little magnet on it on my dashboard of a heart to show me that I have a heart, and it's alive.

No. I have a relationship with it. It's part of my being.

It's keeping me alive. And you see, when you know the true and the living God, you need nothing else. And the further you get away from God, you see, the more idolatry has to be resorted to to affect the soul because there's no spiritual relationship.

God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. And so since there's no real worship in the spirit and in truth, you resort to the soul, the emotions. And so things have to be used to affect the emotions, to make me feel holy or sense holiness in the place.

And so I have to design the place or use the lights a certain way or tapestries and altars and gold to affect the soul and the emotions that this is a holy place. One of the greatest churches there ever was was a garden where two people fellowshiped with the Creator every day. There was no temple or altar in the Garden of Eden.

There was no need even for an altar until after sin. So Paul began to reason with them. Now, the translators translated the word dispute, and that seems a little harsh.

In reality, he began to reason with them. He tried to draw them out, and here's the wisdom of Paul again. He didn't attack them.

He didn't, you know, lash out, because he knew that they were blinded by the God of this world, Satan, and they were very devout, loving people. They loved their children. They loved their country.

But they were blinded by Satan. So rather than put them on the defensive immediately and lash out at them and attack them for their ignorance or their idolatry, he began to reason with them. I think too often, and I look back in my early days, and I was so anxious to get someone saved, just like the Apostle Peter.

Man, look out. Here he comes with the sword of God, and if you aren't worshiping Jesus Christ and you're in some cult, I'll have you sliced to ribbons. You know.

If you're a Mormon, look out. If you're a Jehovah Witness, I can't wait. I'm peeking through the drapes waiting for you to come up to my front door, you two cute little guys in your white shirts and ties and your briefcase.

Are you Mormons? Oh, I'm going to get you, you know. And you open up the door and give them a double-barreled 12-gauge right away. Paul didn't do that.

He reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the devout persons in the market daily with them that met with him. And so he would go to the synagogue first to try and convert his own people, cause them to change their mind toward Jesus as the Jewish Messiah, as word had gotten there from Jerusalem, spread throughout all the land where the Jews were. But then he'd go down into the marketplace where the Greeks were, the Gentiles, and just wait for an opportunity to share with them and talk with them daily.

Then certain philosophers, the Epicureans and the Stoics, encountered him. Now, the intellectuals heard that this guy's in town and talking about a strange new god. And it didn't take long that the intellectuals and the people who loved the debate and just lived to go downtown and maybe drink coffee or tea and smoke their hookahs and everything around maybe the barber shop or whatever it was in Athens of the day.

And they heard about Paul, and so they sought him out. And they said, what will this babbler say? Now, the word babbler in the Greek means this seed-pecker. And they had a term for it in those days that these guys would go around and they were like these birds that go around the ground picking up all kinds of seeds and then having a little bit of everything and then dropping them somewhere else, this seed-pecker, this babbler.

And they were treating Paul as some kind of a babbler who would come along with a little bit of knowledge from this culture, a little bit of knowledge here and there, just to pawn himself off as some kind of intellect just to get involved in the debate. And so they said, we'll duel with you, you know, this babbler. He seemed to be a setter forth of strange gods because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.

Now, immediately Paul went to both the Epicureans and the Stoics. Now, the Epicureans and the Stoics, even though they were, you know, miles apart in their philosophy, neither one of them believed in the afterlife or the human being. Now, they both believed that there were gods and deities.

Now, the Epicureans were started by a man, Epicurus. And all they lived for in that society, and the society was split. The majority of people were either Epicureans or Stoics.

So the Epicureans, following Epicurus, all they lived for was to experience the greatest pleasure there could be but without pain. The greatest pleasure you could ever experience in any aspect of life only without pain before you died. And to live and just, you know, respect your fellow man, but do whatever you wanted to do to experience anything in the flesh but without pain.

And they believed that God was transcendent. That he had really, there were gods, but they had nothing to do, they did not interact with human beings other than just pulling the strings and watching them. That you would never die and then have a resurrection and live eternally.

That the gods controlled everything and brought human beings into existence and their whole existence, the Epicureans, was to experience the maximum of pleasure, whether it be eating, sexual, music, listening, sound, anything, but without pain. Now, the Stoics were at the opposite extreme. They were pantheistic.

Everything was God. The trees, nature, the universe. But you couldn't know God either.

There were gods for everything. They were absolutely pantheistic and whatever there was, there was a God behind it. And they lived to bring themselves under very strong discipline.

To show no emotion. To get in line with the vibrations of the universe of all these gods that were in everything and to get in line with it and just accept your fate, whether it be pleasure or pain, without any kind of complaint. And then you just die.

No eternal life. Just to get in line with whatever the fate of your life was because of the gods and then in line with that and accept whatever happens in your life, know that you had nothing to do, you couldn't change it, there's no relationship with gods whatsoever, and when you die, that was it. But to die noble without showing any kind of emotion.

If your wife died, the Stoic would not weep. If a Stoic reached that high level, there'd be no pain, no grief shown. They'd achieved, you know, that they'd gotten in line with the vibration of all the gods of the universe.

And so the greatest goal was to be able to show no emotion, no pain, no matter what happened, even if your loved one died. And so they strove for that and to accept your fate no matter what it was without batting an eyelash. And so when Paul comes along and starts speaking of a god who is concerned about the human race, a heavenly father who wants to be involved with human beings, that loves human beings, and starts speaking of love and eternal life and life after this, that really stirred them up.

That got their attention. And right away they took him and brought him unto the Areopagus saying, May we know what this new doctrine whereof thou speakest is. This was brand new to them, you see.

Satan had these people trapped, they'd never heard the gospel. There's the beauty of the gospel. Don't be deceived when you're around people that seem so devout and so holy that they think that they've heard the gospel.

Now, if Paul hadn't stirred them up and initiated conversation and began to reason with them, you could be deceived that they were just very deeply religious people and they had a relationship with a living God. If they were Stoics, you know, they wouldn't show pain or sorrow or like they're having any trouble in life. They could be extremely wealthy.

They could have loving families. Either side you pick, Epicureans or the Stoics. They'd never heard the gospel.

On the surface, you might be deceived and think, well, they might be a Christian. They really seem to have it together. But the gospel opens things up.

It's interesting, you get around people, and you've had this happen in your life, I'm sure. You can be very comfortable with any crowd you're in for a while and just be talking about God and religious things. But you

start bringing Jesus to the forefront.

Have you ever noticed how things change in that group? And that really starts turning the lights on. You know, the bugs scatter when the lights are turned on. When you bring out the gospel and Jesus Christ, all of a sudden religious people that are hiding behind that cloak are all of a sudden exposed.

We believe some of the same things you do. Let's not talk about Jesus. We have a different way, and it gets a little touchy sometimes.

And so here's the wisdom of Paul. He immediately brought out the gospel, started bringing out Jesus Christ. He didn't stand out there talking about God.

I think that's a lot of times why a lot of our family members, you see, we avoid the confrontation with our family members. We know they're not born again. Down deep inside, we can tell they're not born again.

They've said the same prayer over dinner for the past 20 years. They don't know what it's like to pray and have the Spirit of God bring their, you know, get in line and actually pray, thinking and with their understanding a real prayer and converse with God. And yet they try to convince you that they're, you know, a believer in Jesus Christ because they remember this denomination.

And you know down deep inside they're not born again. But rather than have a confrontation, we just leave it at God. But then if you start bringing out Jesus Christ, born again, the resurrection, the shed blood, let's not get away from statues and maybe Mary or whatever the Methodists do or the Baptists do.

Are you born again, Mom? Uncle Harry, do you really know Jesus? Do you have the guarantee? Do you really know you have eternal life? Do you understand 1 John? Do you have joy? And then it can really get you, you become fanatical to them. Right? But, you see, if you just stick with God and Christmas and Easter, you know, then, you know, the water stays calm. But that's not the gospel, you see.

And so Paul loved these people too much just to stand around and try and find common ground talking about God. Paul was not a chameleon. He didn't change colors with the crowd that he was with to fit and blend in.

He was not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And notice what it did, you see. Right away they said, hey, you're saying something different that we've never heard.

And so they take him to the Areopagus, and this is where they had all the, you know, this is where the judges and the court system was on this Acropolis overlooking Athens. Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears. We would know, therefore, what these things mean.

For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. And then Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill, and he said, You men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious or very superstitious. Now this is a very interesting word in the Greek.

Now he says you are very, literally, you are very firm in your reverence to demons. Now he didn't say it in an ugly way, in a way to, you know, look down upon them. He just made it very simple saying, you know, you are very, very firm, very devout in your reverence to demons.

Boy, what a way to keep the debate going, huh? That's the Greek word if you want to look it up. Now why did he say that? You remember shortly thereafter he's going to be in Corinth. And Corinth was wholly given over to idolatry, and a lot of the Corinthians began to respond and come out of that system, out of the, you know, that idolatrous system.

And yet they had all these images and these statues of these gods in their homes. And Paul, remember, in writing to 1 Corinthians chapter 10, he said, Know you not that you can't worship Jesus Christ and pray to a statue, that even though the statue may find the lost article or respond to you or give you the answer to your prayer, you may think that it's the Lord. The Lord cannot contradict His own righteous, established law.

He can't go against His character. If He says, don't do it, He won't answer you if you pray to it. So you're being deceived by a demon.

He said, know you not that when you bow down and kneel and pray to a statue, you're praying to demons, to the Corinthian church. In 1 Corinthians, I think it's chapter 10, verses 19 through 21. So God wouldn't say in His word over and over and over again, don't do it, and then answer you if you kneel down before it to do it.

You see, He would contradict His own glory. He wouldn't be God then. He'd be unstable like a human being.

You couldn't depend on His word. And the Bible says God cannot lie. And so Paul right away touches to try and stir them.

He says, you know, you are very firm in your devotion to demons. What? We're worshiping the Queen of Heaven. And that was the principal deity, you remember, the Queen of Heaven.

She's still worshiped over there in that area, Aphrodite, Diana. And he's saying it not to offend them, not to attack them, but to open their eyes, to cause them to think, to have the light of Jesus Christ shine and say, do you realize what you're doing? Do you realize that you're being deceived? Oh, but I heard a voice. Oh, but the thing I prayed for came to pass.

It's still a demon did it. And you're going to get locked in even deeper if you don't let go of this. And so Paul, being guided by the love of God, as he said to the Corinthian church, you know, the love of Christ constrains me, it overwhelms me, the love of Christ in me and my love for you and my concern for you.

He said, I passed by and beheld your devotions. See, he's acknowledging, you're a very devoted people. You're very devout in your religious belief.

You know, a person can be very sincere, but they can be sincerely deceived. And again, I think it's important to realize Paul's not attacking here. Remember, he wrote Ephesians, the great epistle to Ephesians.

He says, speak the truth in love. Sometimes, you see, what keeps me from speaking the truth to someone I even love, that's the fear of man. I fear how they'll react, what they'll think about me if I tell them the truth, even in love.

And so because I am not made perfect in love, I have this torment that they might be offended and I'll lose their friendship, so I don't speak the truth. But if you really love someone, you speak the truth. And it's the fear of man that brings a snare upon a soul.

I fear what man might say. I fear what your reaction may be, so I can't tell you the truth. Paul absolutely is speaking the truth in love.

He does not have the fear of man. He has the fear of God. The greater your fear of God becomes, the less the fear of man becomes.

You're more concerned about what your Father in Heaven thinks about being faithful to Him than losing a human friendship. And no Christian should say, I want to make enemies. I want to lose friends.

No. The issue is, I want to speak the truth in love. I want to glorify my Father in Heaven.

And I love you enough. You are blinded. You're being deceived.

You are very devout in your devotion to your religion, but you're being deceived by demons. And I love you enough to tell you that. And I'm not just conjuring this up in my own mind to hurt your feelings.

This is the Word of God. And some of the people you may speak to claim to have one of these things in their homes and tell you that they're a member of a certain church. You say, this is in your Bible.

This is what God says. He loves you so much. And so Paul said, I passed by and beheld your devotions.

I found an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God, whom therefore you ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you. This is the unknown God. Now, they had hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of gods for everything.

Remember, we touched on this before. They had a god for every aspect even of the emotions. They had a god for sorrow that they could pray to.

They had a god for shame. They had a god for danger, for fear, for war, for wealth, for health. And they had altars and little temples all over the city, little stations where you could stop in and put a little money in a box for your god and lift up a prayer.

That was the culture of the day. You could be going downtown shopping and all of a sudden something would come over you and you'd find a little shrine for your god and step into a little money in a box and pray to your god. And so, just in case, they were so concerned, just in case, they designed an altar for the unknown god.

Like in Article 86, I remember in the Marine Corps. You know, if they couldn't get you on something, they'd get you on Article 86. That covered anything else.

You'd get discharged on Article 86. 86, they called it. Praise the Lord, I got an honorable honor.

That's a miracle. But a lot of guys, you know, they got 86'd. That covered anything else that wasn't in the laws that they would break.

Well, they had a god, the unknown god, just in case. And Paul says, you're ignorantly worshipping. I can tell you who the unknown god is.

You see, it's a god. That's the wonderful thing. It's a god who does want to be involved with the human race.

He's a father in heaven. We're going to be talking about him next Sunday, our wonderful father on Father's Day, our heavenly father, who is concerned for life, who wants to be involved in your life, who wants to bless your life, provide for your life, guide your life, be there for you. And many people don't know this, you see.

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, he dwelleth not in temples made with hands. You've made these things so elaborate. And again, that's how clever Satan is, to put so much in the beauty of the temple, it can actually be a trap and a snare for the people.

This has got to be God. I wonder how much this place cost. Look at the gold.

And so Paul says, hey, he's the creator of the whole earth, the whole universe. You remember in Isaiah 66, verses 1 and 2, God himself said, Thus saith the Lord, The heavens are my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of a temple will you build for me? Speaking to man.

What kind of a house could you build for me? The heaven is my throne, and the earth is nothing but my footstool. What could you as man possibly build that could meet my need? He doesn't even expect us to build anything for him. And so Paul is saying, He dwelleth in temples not made with hands.

You see, he's leading up. He wants to dwell in your heart. So you don't have to look for a shrine somewhere and jump in for whatever mood you're in, or pain you have, or fear you have, or what God you're looking for.

You don't have to find something and jump in it and throw a little money in a box. He's dwelling in your heart no matter where you are. Any time of your life, whether you're waking or sleeping, He's in your heart dwelling inside of you.

Abiding with you forever. He wants you to be the temple. Here are us fallen creatures, us imperfect people, dirty people.

The dirt that's in our hearts. Jesus said, Not what goes into the mouth defileth a man and comes out with a draft, but that which comes out of the heart, that's what defiles a man. Murders and adulteries and thefts and lying and hatred.

And yet God is willing to make that His home, to dwell in my filthy heart and then give me a new one. And neither is He worshipped with men's hands. He's not impressed with gold statues and golden altars and tapestries and pillars and spires and marble.

And the Greeks, you see, they achieved the maximum as far as beauty and ability. And it would dazzle the soul. It would dazzle a human being that wasn't in the spirit.

But it says, He's not worshipped with men's hands. There's nothing that you could... It's beautiful. It's clever.

And the talent of the artisan. If he's a Michelangelo or whoever, that doesn't impress God. Particularly when you don't even know Him.

When you're inventing something in the ignorance as though He needed anything. I've been around people and I think they're doing God a favor by accepting Jesus Christ and joining the church. And they're doing so much for God.

God, You're lucky. Aren't You so lucky, God? I'm in Your church. I go to Calvary Chapel to Finger Lakes.

And I tithe so much. And I do so much for You, Lord. Are You kidding? I'm glad God comes to Calvary Chapel to Finger Lakes.

I'm glad He shows up. Where two or more are gathered in His name. There I am in Your midst.

Oh, thank You, Lord, that You visit this skating rink, this place that we sing in and study about You in. There's nothing but a shack. But God's pleased to meet with us here.

Because He loves you. And He's more concerned with what's going on in your heart. He's more concerned about the inside of you than the inside of this place.

This is nothing. Remember, He's going to destroy the whole world and the whole universe. Something that He made in perfection in the beginning.

And He's still holding together. And as beautiful as we think it is, it says it's all going to burn. Peter says it's all going to dissolve.

The elements are going to melt with fervent heat. And the whole universe is going up and disappearing and dissolving into nothing. And yet, before that takes place, He's going to personally bring you into His presence to dwell with Him forevermore and give you a brand new body.

A brand new body. And loves you so much, He wants you to live with Him for eternity. He giveth to all life and breath and all things.

You know, as beautiful as the Greek statues were, not one Greek brilliant mind could make it talk or come alive. And isn't it amazing? The very marble, the very clay, the very elements from the earth that they built these magnificent temples out of and these statues, it's the very same mineral element and makeup that's in your body. Yet God can take that marble and that zinc and that lead and that magnesium and that chromium and that dirt and it comes forth as a baby.

He just rearranges the molecules and the chemicals, the same thing, and makes it live. There isn't a human being that can make a statue talk. As beautiful as they can make it.

And so Paul's saying, hey, as beautiful as all this is and impressed as you are with all the works of your hands, thinking it pleases and impresses God, it doesn't. He's not worshipped that way. He's worshipped in spirit and in truth.

He's worshipped by the way we do our chores every day. You know, I've discovered that I can have a beautiful day if I just dedicate the whole day to worship. I used to think, oh, I've got to work today.

I've got to work around the yard. I've got to work around the house. I've got to work at the church.

I've got to study. You know what? I got to thinking, wow, it's nothing but an act of worship. I can just give my day and everything I do that day, Lord, it's an act of worship for you.

I want to do the right kind of heart. I love you, and so I'm going to do it without murmuring or complaining. Whatever it is I'm doing today, Lord, it's an act of worship.

Whether I'm doing something manually, or whether I'm singing, or whether I'm studying, reading, praying, thinking, responding, reacting, Lord, I want to worship you. I want my life to be an act of worship. I love you so much.

I'm so thankful. I don't break the day down. This is, I worship on Sunday, and I work on Monday, and I study on Tuesday, and I work in the yard on Wednesday.

I have vacation on Saturday. No, I want my every day of the week to be an act of worship, no matter what I do, and then I can enjoy it, you see. I worship you, oh Lord.

That's what he's concerned about. Do we see everything as a duty, or I have to do this now, or are we really worshipping? Lord, I'm so thankful for my salvation. I'm so thankful for your love for me, Lord.

I want my life to be an act of worship. He doesn't need anything. Does God really need it? Does God need a fancy building, or my money, or my efforts? No, I need His effort in my life.

I'm so thankful. He wants to work in my life, this act of love, to bring me into harmony with Himself, to begin to reveal Himself more to me that I can enjoy His love even more, know Him in a greater way. And He hath made of one blood all nations.

Isn't that saying we're all the same, guys? The outside may differ, be different. You know, we're a different color on the outside, but we're all His kids. We're all brothers and sisters.

We're of one blood. That's another foolish thing that we've been taught in our school systems, that some races are different or inferior. We're all of one blood.

And He's made us to dwell on the face of the earth, and have determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation. Now, Deuteronomy, I think it's chapter 32, verse 8. God declares that He took the seed of Adam and spread them out over the earth and set the bounds and designed the different races for His glory. And then He picked the Jewish race for His own tithe to Himself, His portion.

He took a portion of the human race. He designed the Gentile races and spread them out, the seed of Adam. But He picked Jacob, the seed of Jacob, for His own tithe out of the human race for Himself and set the boundaries.

And that's why you have the different, you know, cultural and ethnic boundaries on the human race. God designed it all. And it's His pleasure then to reveal Himself to all these people through all these races.

That's what brings God glory. That all the people He's designed would come to know Him and then He can bring us all back into fellowship together again. He designed it that way.

That this one culture wasn't going to have a different God than this culture and this race have a different God than this race of people. No, God divided and separated the seed of Adam and spread them out and formed their boundaries, their heritage, their language, their culture, the different wonderful things about them all. And then one day He's going to bring us all back together with this beautiful design in all of us and we're all going to be worshipping together again.

He does it in a church, in a real live church. You see Him do it. We all become one in the Spirit together.

Just a little foretaste of the kingdom age and glory when we're all going to be dwelling together in love and harmony. It's going to be fantastic. I like it now.

And what pleases God is to reveal to all these people, I'm your creator, I love you. I've got a special plan and purpose for you people. Everybody here, God has a purpose for your life.

And not one person here is inferior or superior to someone else. You are all what you are by God's marvelous design and plan and purpose for your life to bring Him glory and He wants to be glorified through you and He will if you will let Him. And just because you have a different background or a different race or educational background or different level in society or money or whatever, that means nothing, that's not a handicap with God.

He could care less about that. He wants to glorify Himself and He has a plan to bring glory to Himself through you. Just the way you are right now.

And He's just wondering if you'll let Him. And His design is that they would seek the Lord, if happily they might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us. Remember in Romans 10, Paul said, He's nigh thee, He's at the doors of your lips, He's at your mouth, right in your heart, if thou wilt confess that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead.

He's God's Son, thou shalt be saved. He says you don't have to go up into heaven, ascend way up into heaven and bring Christ down, or go down into the depths, into the deep, and bring Christ up and achieve some great goal. It's nigh thee, at the door of your lips, it's right in your mouth if you just ask.

And seek the Lord, and He says, He that seeketh Me shall find Me if he will seek Me with all of his heart. And God forsaketh none that seeketh after Him, the Bible says. For in Him we live and move and have our being.

As certain also of your own poets have said, for we are also His offspring. Paul, being well-read, educated in that Gentile world, influenced by the Greek culture, quoted, made reference to two of those Greek poets. We're all the offspring of God.

We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone, graven by art and man's device. Interesting. I think it's Deuteronomy chapter 7. Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 7. And again, here's how clever Satan is.

He'll make the idol out of gold and silver. Then what are you going to do? This is an heirloom from Mabel. You can't get rid of that.

Deuteronomy is an awesome book. Let's see. There's a couple spots here.

Look at what it says in verse 25. Remember, God's leading the children of Israel into the promised land, but He's going to drive out the idolaters, the Canaanites, before, you know, when they get there. He says, The graven images of their gods shall you burn with fire.

Now this is how God finds out if we love Him, if we're going to be faithful to Him, if we have the fear of man or we're going to be faithful to God. Thou shalt not desire the silver gold. You mean just destroy it? Can't we melt it down and use it for the gospel? No, it's dirty, and God doesn't want dirty money.

And He tests us to see if we really love Him. Yeah, but you know what this is worth, Lord? Thou shalt not desire the silver gold that is on it, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein, for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God. I'm convinced that's why people don't want to read the Bible.

They're afraid what they're going to find in there, and they have a decision to make. Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thy house. Yes, but it's Uncle George's.

It's been handed down for centuries, this little gold statue. But it's an idol. You see, now God leaves it up to us.

My heart goes out to people that stew over these things and wrestle with it and turn inside. Why not just get rid of it? You know, it's easy when you love God. You just get rid of it.

You don't worry about what Uncle John says or Grandma says. You worry about what God wants you to do. It's unclean, it's dirty.

Why even associate with it? Why have it in the house? God says, Neither shalt thou bring the abomination into thine house, lest thou be cursed. A cursed thing like it. Thou shalt utterly detest it.

And here's how Satan gets the people. It's made out of gold or silver, man. It's worth something.

That's it. I'm finding a church that doesn't teach this kind of stuff. I never did want to study Deuteronomy.

I like the New Testament. Thou shalt utterly hate it, for it is a cursed thing. Now, there again God says, How far do you want to go with me? And so here's Paul.

Remember, he's confronting these idolaters. He's confronting people that are trapped in that. Now, God told his people Israel, Don't let it happen to you.

I'm keeping you separate from the Gentile world. Let them all have their idols. Let them call their idols whatever they want to call them.

But don't you do it. You're my people. So here comes Paul as a Jew.

And that's the one thing. The Jews were not idolaters. Now he knows the truth, who Jesus Christ is.

He's coming into an idolater's Gentile world. Coming from a background where he wasn't idolaters. He knows the danger of it.

Now he confronts the Gentiles with it. We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone, graven by art or man's device. That's New Testament, folks.

That's not Deuteronomy here. You say, Well, why did God allow it? At times of this ignorance, God looked the other way or winked at it. But now, since Jesus Christ has come, not just the Jews are to be freed from idolatry, but the Gentile world, if they're going to follow Jesus Christ.

But now he commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised them from the dead. This is the mind-blower. This is the thing that's so phenomenal to these Greeks.

They think that the best thing to do is either take the Epicurean way or the Stoic way and try and survive life, accept my fate, experience all the pleasure and all the fun I can possibly get, you only go around once in life, and then die. And here this Paul comes along and says, You know, all your religion, your statues, your temples, and your devotion has kept you deceived and in darkness. Now, repent, have a change of mind.

You can have eternal life. There's a God who you can know personally, who loves you, that wants to be involved in your life. This God that I'm introducing you to, he's been raised from the dead.

That was unheard of to the Greek. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. And others said, We will hear thee again on this matter.

And that's usually the same scenario today with the intellectuals. You know, because you're too deeply religious. They've got university degrees, and their Messiah is Darwin.

When they heard of that, they mocked. Others said, Well, we will hear thee again on this matter. Howbeit certain men claimed unto him and believed among the which was Dionysius, the Arab apogite, and a woman named Damaris and others with him.

So a handful of these important people that would meet the judicial branch up there on Mars Hill at the Arapagus did respond to him. And so there's a foothold there in Athens with a couple of the intellects and a couple of important people. It only takes one or two people, and then you've got an invasion into a family or into a social structure, into a group of people.

Just to show you how accurate the Bible is, I wanted to read something else to you. Turn to Deuteronomy 16. I happened to look at this, and then somebody had given me something today to show you why our educational system is down the tubes.

This is Deuteronomy 12. I'm sorry, Deuteronomy 12, 29 and 30. Again, before God led the children of Israel into the land of Canaan, he's going to drive out the idolaters.

Now remember, the Canaanites were sexually perverted, grossly idolaters. They were a sick society. And so God was replacing them with his people, Israel, and establishing his kingdom on the earth to be an example and a light to the world.

Now notice in verse 29 what God told through Moses his people, when you come in and I give you this land to bless it. When the Lord thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land, take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them. And in another place he said, don't send your kids to their schools.

Can you imagine the Israelites going into this land and turning their children over the Hittite school system and have the kids learn it all over, then come home at night and then their Jewish parents say, no, but we don't do it that way, we don't believe that way, don't accept that. No, that's wrong. Yes, but this is what they're teaching me in school, mom and dad.

They say that we're weird. So God says, don't allow the Hittites and the Canaanites and the Amalekites and the Amorites to teach your children. Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee, and that thou inquire not after their gods.

Oh, but we're learning all the religions of the land, mom and dad. These are nice people. Our teachers are really neat people.

They don't see anything wrong with their gods versus our God, mom and dad. And so the Lord said, don't even inquire after their gods, saying, how did those nations serve their gods? Even so will I do likewise. You see, if you do, Israel, you'll start worshipping them over again.

Satan will lay low for a while, and you'll begin to lose your children in their schools, and pretty soon, after a few generations, you're going to lose your children and you're going to lose your nation. You'll be right back at it again, just like the very heathen that I drove out before you. So, Paul walks into a Greek culture, great society, but absolutely blind, and he says, you're all idolatrous.

You're worshipping ignorantly. Repent. There's a God in heaven that loves you.

And he revealed Jesus Christ to these people. It's so good to know the truth, isn't it? And to know that no matter where I am, the shrine is here. It's in my heart.

The altar, the temple. God's pleased to dwell within this body that's not made by hand. That's his temple now.

Your body, the Bible says, can be the temple of the Holy Ghost. If you invite Jesus Christ into your life. And he's never far away then.

He'll abide with you forever. Father, your word, as Solomon writes, tells us there's nothing new under the sun. We really aren't any different than the very society that Paul walked into in Athens 2,000 years ago.

But we have the advantage, Lord, of knowing the truth as Paul did. And we'd ask you, Father, to keep us walking in the truth. We pray, dear Lord, that you'd work in our lives and cause us to yield through your love and your grace that there'd be no issue or question on the value of some idol.

Or the fear of what some relative would think of me. Lord, we love to be challenged to prove our love for you. We desire the blessings, Lord, of responding to your challenges.

As Abraham did by offering up Isaac. Lord, how we love to fellowship with you and walk in the spirit with you. And be aware of your presence every moment of the day.

And Lord, what a pleasure it is to be brought to a point where we can dedicate the whole day, no matter what we do, as an act of worship. And Lord, our flesh rebels against us, so continually overwhelm us with your love, Lord. Make us willing.

Give us even more of an understanding of your great grace and love. And may we share it with others, Lord. May we not attack or ridicule or denigrate, Lord, but may we speak the truth in love, as Paul did, as our Lord Jesus did so often.

In his name we pray. Amen.

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