

Acts 17:16-34

- Paul's Conversion (AD 35)
Acts 9
- Paul's first visit to Jerusalem
(Acts 9:26-29) AD 38
- Second visit to Jerusalem (Acts
11:27-30) AD 45
- First Journey (Acts 13:1-14:28)
AD 46-48, about 1.5 years
- Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-
35)
- **Second Journey (Acts 15:40-
Acts 18:22) AD 49**
- Third Journey (Acts 18:23-
21:24) AD 53-57 about three
years.
- Arrest & Imprisonment in Caesar
- Voyage to Rome (Acts 27:1-28)
- Release and further work (AD 6
- Final Imprisonment and death (A



A. Reputation

1. Athens, now incorporated into the Roman Empire, was renowned for its proud intellectual independence. It boasted of its rich philosophical tradition inherited from Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, as well as its literature, art, and notable achievements in the cause of human liberty.

B. Sites

1. Acropolis—an ancient, elevated citadel that could be seen for miles as it overlooks the city of Athens. It was dedicated to Greece's national glory and the worship of its gods.
2. Parthenon – the most famous structure of the Acropolis, a temple dedicated to the goddess Athena, the patron deity of Athens.
3. Market (Agora): This was a central public space located below the Acropolis and closely connected to it. Athenians gathered there for trade, public discussions, civic meetings, and social events.

C. Idols

1. “*full of idols*” (**Acts 17:16**) “*kateidolōs*” – only time this word is used in the NT. Communicates the idea that Athens was “swamped or awashed” in idols or “under” the idols. “Smothered under idols.”
2. Xenophon, Greek historian, referred to Athens as ‘*one great altar, one great sacrifice.*’ The consequence was, ‘*there were more gods in Athens than in all the rest of the country*’, and another commentator says that it was ‘*easier to find a god there than a man.*’

A. **Acts 17:16** says he was ‘provoked’ or others ‘greatly distressed.’ It is the word ‘*paroxyno*,’ which had medical associations and was used for a seizure or epileptic fit. It could mean ‘stimulate,’ as in ‘irritate, provoke, rouse to anger.’

B. Paul uses ‘*paroxyno*’ in his first letter to the Corinthian church, describing love as ‘not easily angered.’ This provocation became his motivation for evangelism.

III. What Paul Did

- A. First, what he did not do. He did not throw up his hands in despair, weep helplessly, or curse and swear at the Athenians.
- B. He obediently, lovingly, and passionately shared the Gospel

IV. What Paul Said

- A. God is Creator (Acts 17:24)
 - 1. Transcendence - refers to God's existence above, beyond, and independent from His creation. God's nature is fundamentally different from His created order; He is not bound by time, space, or any limitations of the physical world. **Genesis 1:1.** *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Isaiah 42:5, Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it:*
 - 2. God's "thinking" is different
 - a) **Isaiah 55:8-9,** *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*
 - 3. God exists in a realm of holiness and majesty inaccessible to us as finite creatures.
 - 4. Transcendence highlights God's self-sufficiency and His omnipotence, which are seen in:
 - a) **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 that I have built!"*
 - 5. All creation depends on God for life (**Colossians 1:16-17,** *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*)
 - 6. However, transcendence does not imply distance or disinterest in His creation. God is not distant or disengaged. (**Acts 17:27b-28**) **Jeremiah 23:23-24**
 - a) This dual aspect of God's nature—His being both transcendent and immanent—calls for a response of deep reverence and awe while also assuring that He is a present help in times of need. His unapproachable holiness and infinite greatness inspire worship and reverence, while His nearness and grace invite trust and relationship.
- B. God is Sustainer (Acts 17:25)
 - 1. He who sustains life, needs no sustaining!
 - 2. We depend on God, He does not depend on us.
- C. God is Ruler (Acts 17:26)
 - 1. From him descends the whole human race along with our inherited sin nature.
 - 2. **Romans 5:12-21 & 1 Cor 15:21**
- D. God is the Father of Human Beings (Acts 17:28b-29)
 - 1. Human beings (us) bear the image of God, though marred by sin and its disastrous effects.
 - 2. Regarding redemption, God is Father only to those adopted by grace into His family.
- E. God is Judge (Acts 17:30-31)
 - 1. God will judge the world with righteousness at the appointed time

V. How Paul Challenges Us - The Light for Our Path

- A. Our penchant for things other than God
 - 1. "The human heart is a perpetual idol factory." -John Calvin
 - 2. "Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God." -Martin Luther
 - 3. "What the heart loves, the will chooses, and the mind justifies." Thomas Cranmer
- B. Our Motivation for evangelism
 - 1. First, it is obedience to the great commission.
 - 2. Second, it is compassion for the lost.
 - 3. Third, it is zeal for the glory of Jesus Christ.