

Church – The Beginnings, Part 50

Paul's Mission to Athens – Part 1

Acts 17:15-17 | 10/15/2017

NEW LIFE FELLOWSHIP

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Act 17:15-17

Those who were caring for Paul's safety went with him as far as Athens, and then left him, taking a message from him to Silas and Timothy, asking them to join him as speedily as possible.

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was **stirred** within him when he noticed that the city was **full of idols**. ¹⁷ [Therefore] he had **discussions** in the synagogue with the Jews and the other worshippers [i.e.: Gentile Converts and Gentile God-Fearers], and in the market place, day after day, with those whom he happened to meet.

[from 1912 Weymouth New Testament, emphasis and notes: Pastor Andy's emphasis it is the best overall translation of this passage I could find]

1. While Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy –

Why was Paul's spirit stirred (provoked, angered, deeply moved)?

Answer: He saw all the idols and that the city was fully given over to full idolatry.

Just like Jesus, Paul's heart was moved with compassion (see Matt. 9:35-38)

2. Those ancient statues or idols – **so what's the big deal?**

Answer: Since, the **Tower of Babel and Nimrod** – Genesis 10 & 11:1-9 – idolatry has been at the heart of all humans → it is a symptom of our sinful depravity. The Tower of Babel was the climax of our sinful pride of worshipping ourselves and worshipping anyone and anything else other than the True and Living God, the Creator of the Universe (i.e. the God of Israel).

The **downfall of Sodom & Gomorrah** (those other wicked cities) was Idolatry (along with gross immorality that was the fruit of Idolatry)

The **downfall of the Northern 10 Tribes of Israel**, and the **Southern Kingdom of Judah** was Idolatry. This is repeated over and over again in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Open and Hidden Idolatry.

Idolatry is more than just bowing down to, praying to, and worshipping some idol (some statue). It has everything to do with all of the trappings of that religion, that "faith". All the beliefs, practices, traditions, rituals, philosophies, principles, and "holy-days", etc. of that "religion" → **Idolatry**. Paganism, Wicca, Witchcraft, Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, Shintoism, Islam, Animism, etc. are all modern "packaging" of the same old IDOLATRY. The Roman Catholic church blended much of paganism / idolatry into their "religion", as well. This is very plain to see, even today when you see folks bowing down to statues, praying to saints and to Mary, etc. – same old, same old – just repackaged. In Islam, when you see Muslims bowing down to the Ka'aba, kissing the Back Stone in the Ka'aba in Mecca. It is still idolatry – old Babylonian Mystery Religion – just repackaged.

Idolatry Breaks The First 2 Commandments

Exodus 20:2-6 - "I AM Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

³ (1st) **You shall have no other gods before Me.**

⁴ (2nd) **You shall not make for yourselves an idol, nor any image of anything that is in the heavens above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: ⁵ you shall not bow yourself down to them, nor serve them, for I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and on the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments."**

3. **Paul was moved to Action** → what was that Action? (see Acts 17:17)

After assessing the main SINFUL Issue that Athens had → **IDOLATRY** – He went to Work ...
He did **NOT** Succumb to “I CAN’T Do This” or “I GIVE UP” or to “depression”
nor was he overwhelmed with the insurmountable, seemingly impossible task ...

Paul was MOVED from the Heart to share the GOSPEL:

- a. In the **Synagogue** – Reasoning – **DIALOGING** – Discussion – Conversation – Arguing
Just like we’ve seen Paul do in the past – from Acts 13 unto Acts 17:17 ... same pattern
Reasoning, Discussions, Civil, etc.
Luke doesn’t record that anyone became a disciple of Jesus Christ, here.
- b. In the **Marketplace** – The **AGORA** – More than an Open Market – or – Farmer’s Market ...
It would be like the Center of Town, the Public Square ...
Not only is commerce conducted there, also exchange of ideas, dialog, discussion ...
It is a place of politics, economics, and academics, as well.
It would be like Washington DC, Las Vegas, and all the Farmers Markets – rolled into
one place → It might look like India’s New Delhi or Mumbai (Bombay), etc.
A Very Busy Place.

Notice – Paul talked with those that he met – so this is **NOT** → Open Air Preaching
This is one-on-one dialogue with those that would talk with him, as he “happened” to
meet individuals, etc.

Again, so far we have **NO** Examples of Open Air Preaching – which does not mean that
God is against it, we just have **NO** examples of this in Scripture in the book of Acts.

This is the first time we see some example of Paul, in the open market place, talking
with people ... with a description of **HOW** he did it →

One-on-One with people, Face-To-Face

Paul, as an example for us – God used as an example for us, today – anyone can do this
We’ve had many occasions of Paul in the Synagogue, which does not apply to us, today
But, Paul in the Marketplace (AGORA) totally fits us, today. **We, all, can do this.**

Again, Luke doesn’t record that anyone became a disciple of Jesus Christ, here.

Paul’s Faithfulness in Praying, Plowing, and Planting Seeds, will pay off, eventually for
more open doors for Paul’s Faithfulness – an Open Door – Invitation – to share the
Gospel with the Elites of the City of Athens.

(Luke 16:10 - He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much)

Tune in next week for more on **Paul’s Mission to Athens.**