

Alone In Athens

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[0:00] Acts chapter 17 and verse 15. The men who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.

A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, what is this babbler trying to say? Others remarked, he seems to be advocating foreign gods.

They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus where they said to him, May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting.

You're bringing some strange ideas to our ears and we want to know what they mean. All the Athenians and the foreigners who live there spend their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.

[1:15] Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said, Men of Athens, I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription, To an unknown God.

Now what you worship is something unknown. I am going to proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.

And he is not served by human hands as if he needed anything because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man, he made every nation of men that they should inhabit the whole earth.

And he determined the time set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, we are his offspring. Therefore, since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image made by man's design and skill.

[2:38] In the past, God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed.

And he has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead. When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, we want to hear you again on this subject.

At that, Paul left the council. A few became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others. Does it ever distress you to see men giving to idols what they owe to God? Here the apostle Paul, having been hurried out of Thessalonica because of the people that wanted his life there, is escorted down to Athens, and he's now waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

So, alone in Athens with time on his hands, what does he do? Well, he goes on a sightseeing walk through the city.

[4:00] Now, architects and historians can tell us what it was that Paul saw on that sightseeing walk. Athens was full of amazing art and architecture.

It was the art center of the then-known world. Magnificent buildings were decorated with ornate carvings to the gods. There was an Olympic-style stadium in the city built entirely of marble. A large theater, buildings with great porticos and colonnades lined the streets. Great halls that housed schools, world-renowned schools of philosophy.

And then the Parthenon, poised on the Acropolis, overlooking the city, boasted to be the most beautiful temple in the world. And everywhere Paul looked, he saw them.

Idols. Idols. And more idols. And more idols. Petronius claimed it was easier to find a god than a man in Athens.

[5 : 13] One visitor counted 30,000 public statues to their gods. Every doorway had its image of its protecting deity.

And the streets were lined with them. It was claimed that there were more idols in the city of Athens than there was in the whole nation of Greece put together.

The ancient writer Lucian tells us of his visit to the city. He says, When I first came to Athens, I gazed with wonder and rapture at all the glory of the city.

That was Lucian. When he came and saw this city, he was struck with awe at its glory and splendor. Now the Apostle Paul saw the very same sights, but came away with a different response. For we read that he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols.

[6 : 17] Now why the difference? Two men looking at the same things, but with two greatly different reactions. Well, Paul saw with different eyes than Lucian.

Eyes that penetrated behind the outward splendor of it all. And Paul saw that all this splendor was given over to the worship of these gods, these idols.

Representations of false gods, which are, of course, no gods at all. And it both provoked him and pained him at the same time. It stirred him up.

It cut him. It hurt him. It angered him. It irritated him. Now, Paul would have been greatly distressed for at least two reasons. First of all, his concern for the glory of God.

God the Creator deserves the praise and glory of all his creatures. They exist for him. And so all mankind owes him worship, honor, love, obedience, trust, praise, and thanks.

[7 : 29] And you see, idolatry is a refusal to give God what is due him. And even worse, it is worship stolen from God and given to false gods in his place.

It's simply not right. When God is the one who shows kindness by giving rain from heaven and crops in their seasons and provides plenty of food for us, and man not only refuses to thank him, but instead bows down and thanks some idol of the fertility god, as if he's been enriched by that god.

So Paul's spirit is rightly provoked to see God dishonored by idols. But Paul would have been also concerned and greatly distressed, secondly, because of his concern for the good of men.

Man was made in the image of God. Man was made to reflect his likeness, to know God, to have a relationship with him. Indeed, he was made to be a temple in which the living God dwelt.

And here he is, bowing before lifeless objects of metal and stone. Oh, it was our honor, having come from the hand of God, to be a temple of the living God.

[8 : 56] And man was filled with glory, the image of God. But now we are like the ruins of Athens. The dim reminder of days that used to be, of the glory that used to be, when God did fill his temple, man.

But now, God has left the temple, and Ichabod is written across man. And man is scarcely what he once was and what he was made to be.

He's a pitiful reflection of what he once was. You see, we become what we worship. We become like the gods that we worship.

And if it's not God, then it's worthless things, as the scriptures call them. The worship of God lifts man up.

It lifts us up to him and to being like him, bearing his image. But the worship of idols debases man. It pulls him down.

[10 : 01] It strips him of honor. And so these Athenians, who claimed to be so wise, had become fools. Worshiping and serving created things instead of the glorious creator.

They exchanged the glory of God, we're told, for the glory of the immortal God, for images made to look like mortal man, beasts, and birds, and creeping things.

That's a demotion. To go from worshiping the one eternal, immortal God to worshiping snakes, and rats, and pigs, and creatures.

It reduces man to the level little higher than a beast. Well, idolatry robs man, you see, of his God-given honor of reflecting his glory.

Paul sees this in the idolatry of Athens. He sees behind all these vast structures to the gods that are being honored by them.

[11:02] And he could not look at this city full of idols without seeing his God dishonored and his fellow man debased, and it gave him a holy heartburn. So how do you see?

How do you look at your world? What do you see when you do look at the world? And it's great achievements of man.

It's great universities. It's skyscraping office buildings. It's massive manufacturing plants. It's great wealth. It's sports arenas. It's concert halls.

It's government buildings. It's mansions. What do you see? Do you stand and stare with Lucian and say, Wow! Perhaps there's a place for that wow.

But there ought to be, if we have anything of the heart of the Lord Jesus, there ought to be a deep agitation within us, as there was found in Paul a great distress, to see men giving themselves over to idols.

[12:08] Idols of power, of prestige, of lust, of the almighty dollar, of man's own reasoning, debasing himself before such lifeless things.

Does it ever move you, when you see that, to cry out to God for our nation, to deliver us from our idolatry?

Does it ever move you to take the gospel to your neighbor and to take the gospel to your fellow man and to seek to lift him up to the Christ that could save him and redeem him?

You see, Paul was so distressed that he did something about it, didn't he? He was stirred to action. And he began preaching the gospel of Jesus and reasoning with men about the truth.

That was the result of his great distress over the idolatry of the city. And it ought to be the result in our lives when we see the idolatry of our own nation.

[13:08] And so he began preaching, both in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, and then in the marketplace, day by day, with any who happened to be there, calling men to turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven, even Jesus, who delivers us from the coming wrath.

Athens. It was the philosophical center of the world. One of the proud idols of Athens was human reason. Man's mind, the measure of all things.

And the Athenian school of philosophy boasted the likes of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. They had taught in their schools. They had established schools and taught in the streets of Athens.

And they had their ideas on the origin of the universe, about the nature of reality. And many other things. And it all was woven together with their idolatry.

And their false gods. Human philosophy so saturated Athens that every Athenian was a self-professed philosopher. As verse 21 says, all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.

[14:30] Well, this is life in Athens. Can you see it? You're down at the barber shop. You're at the coffee shop. You're at the salon and spa. At the sporting events.

In their plays. In the marketplace. And the discussion is always about the latest ideas. Have you heard? This notion. Well, the other day I heard someone say this.

And have you considered that? The latest ideas were always needed to replace the older ideas. The former ideas. Because that's the way it is with man's ideas. They're always changing, aren't they? Realizing that the last explanation of reality simply doesn't cover all the bases.

So we've got to discard that and come up with a new explanation of reality. A new philosophy. A new science. A new theory. New morals. New ideas. Ever learning.

[15:31] And never able to come to the truth. That's stamped on man's wisdom. And it was raining in Athens. And over against that stands the truth of God.

Unchanged. Unchanging. Forever settled in heaven. Brothers and sisters, we don't treasure this book enough. We live in a world where truth is constantly changing.

Man's truth. Man's wisdom. And here we have it. Here we have it. One day this little Jew called Paul shows up in the marketplace preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

So here we have a showdown. We have the gospel. The very wisdom of God coming up against the wisdom of this world. Athens is man's thought at its best.

And now it meets up with God's thought. Will these self-professed wise people recognize true wisdom when they hear it? Well, Paul stirred quite a hubbub.

[16:41] It says that some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. What's this babbler trying to say? Now that was not a compliment.

That was a derogatory term in Athens. It's like a bird that just goes around picking up scraps in the marketplace. And that's this guy.

He just goes around the world picking up scraps of truth and sayings of people and philosophies.

And just goes around like a peddler peddling all these little scraps of belief.

What's this babbler trying to say? I say that response is more an indictment upon Athens than it was upon Paul. As it is of modern America.

An indictment upon us. When we reject the wisdom of God. They hear a man speaking the wisdom of God and they call it babblings.

[17:42] Oh, but let them hear the ignorance of man with a PhD and they call it wisdom. So where did life come from? Man has always been interested in this question.

They were interested in Athens. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Says our Bible. Foolishness.

Says man. But when Bill Nye, the science guy, says, well, it all came from Mars. The Martians seeded life on planet Earth.

Oh, what wisdom. The scientists speak with. F.F. Bruce says that though the Epicureans and Stoics differed greatly with each other.

Their philosophies were contradictory. Yet on this they agreed. That this newfangled message brought by this Jew of Tarsus was not one that could appeal to reasonable man. And that is always the verdict when God's truth is being judged by man's thought.

[18:46] It's folly to man. What's this babbler trying to say? Others were more polite. He seems to be advocating foreign gods.

One called Jesus. You know, we've got a lot of gods in our pantheon. But we've never heard of this foreign god. Jesus. And they dismiss their own creator as some foreign god.

Some localized deity. Over here. Over a few men or a nation here or there. Haven't heard about this one. But they were curious and wanted more details.

You're bringing some new and strange ideas to our ears. We want to know what they mean. So they take Paul to their esteemed court of ideas. The Areopagus. Where Paul's philosophy is now to be heard out.

And to be judged by the wise men of Athens. So we come to Paul's message to these pagan thinkers in Athens. Now we've seen and heard some of the sermons of Paul.

[19:48] Paul, when speaking to the Jews in the synagogues, he's reasoning from their very own Old Testament scriptures. Proving that Jesus is the Messiah that had been promised.

But now, he's not speaking to Jews in the synagogue. He's speaking to pagans who know nothing of the Old Testament scriptures. That doesn't mean that Paul scraps his biblical message.

In fact, his message is as biblical to the pagans on Mars Hill as it is biblical to the Jews in the synagogue. But instead of saying, as Isaiah said, or as your Old Testament prophet said, he quotes some of their own prophets that had little statements of truth that he borrows to make his point.

But it's still the biblical message. His whole argument is based on the truth of scriptures. And we see this just at a glance at it.

Because just like the Bible, his presentation begins with God the Creator. Genesis 1-1. And ends with God the Judge.

[20:54] The end of Revelation. Paul stood up and said, Men of Athens, I see that in every way you're very religious.

For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription. To the unknown God. These people were so fascinated with their gods.

With temples and altars to so many gods. It seemed they didn't want to overlook any. You wouldn't want to hurt the feelings of one of the gods. You could bring down the anger of the God upon you.

And so we must, by all means, cover all the bases. And they had all their gods and temples and altars. And yet there must have been a nagging suspicion that we might have forgotten one or two.

So an altar was erected to the unknown God. And Paul seizes upon that as a point of contact and says to them, This one that you worship as unknown, I now will proclaim to you.

[21:58] Because his God, the one true God, was indeed unknown to these Athenians. Notice how Paul introduces the true and living God to his Athenian idolaters.

First of all, he is the maker of everything. The God who made the world and everything in it. You know, that's where the Bible starts, isn't it? And that's where Paul starts.

And may I say that we probably need to start there too. Because we now live in a nation that no longer holds to creation as being the explanation.

God's creation as being the explanation of the beginning of our world. With pagan America brought up in the line with the lie of macroevolution.

That everything evolved from a lower life form and down to some soup. We need to start where Paul starts.

[23:04] The living God made the world and everything in it. The universe and everything in it.

Notice the singular. It says, the God singular. The God singular. Who made the world and everything in it.

Not gods, but one God made it all. You see, it leaves no room for all these gods of the Athenians. God alone exists before and outside of creation.

And he made everything else that exists. He alone is the uncreated creator. And that's where Paul starts. And it's an important foundation for what comes next.

For he says, secondly, that this God is the Lord of everything. He's the maker of everything. And he's the Lord of everything. The God who made the world and everything in it.

[24:07] That is the Lord of heaven and earth. That language, heaven and earth, is the whole shoot and match. It's the whole universe. It's the world and everything in it.

And so, what Paul is saying is, since he's the maker of all that exists. He is also the Lord. The ruler. The master.

The governor. The governor. Of all that exists. You see, his lordship overall is founded upon the fact that he created it all.

What he makes, he rules. And because he made you, he has a right to rule you. To give you commands. And he does do that, doesn't he? Notice the extent of his lordship.

How far does it reach? Just as far as his creating. Lord of heaven and earth. He who made everything rules over everything.

[25:03] Now, this would create a problem for the Athenians. The pagan mind had created a God for every aspect of creation. So, if it rained, they thanked their rain God.

And then they had their sun God and their moon God. And their gods of the stars. They had the God of the river. The gods of the field. The gods of the mountains.

The gods of the plains. The gods of the sea. The gods of the air. The gods of this nation. The gods of that nation. Of this city and that city. And each had their own individual jurisdictions.

That these gods ruled over. The God of fertility. The God of protection. The God of good luck. On and on.

All of creation was parceled off to these many different gods. But Paul says that the God. The one God who made the whole world.

[26:03] Is the ruler of the whole world. And everything in it. He's no localized foreign deity over here. Ruling over one part of reality.

And so with these few words. Paul would empty the whole Parthenon of gods. That the Athenians had created.

He is lord. Master of everything. Ruler of everything. And then he says thirdly. He's totally self-sufficient. He's the only one like that.

We all need something. We all need God. But God needs nothing and no one. He's not like your gods. He would say to the Athenians.

Who need you. And your service. Your gods need you to build temples for them to live in. Even this massive Parthenon. He might have pointed to above them. Was made to house the city's patron goddess Athena.

[27:02] But the true God. Does not live in temples built by hands. How do you contain the one who created heaven and earth.

In some temple that human hands have built. No. Heaven is my throne he says. 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. He's too big for you to contain him in a temple. Like you've done with all your gods.

And he's not served by human hands. As if he needed anything. Your gods need your service. Your sacrifices. Yes you bring them. They get hungry.

You bring them sacrifices of food. And so on. But not the true God. He says I have no need of a bull from your stall. Or a goat from your pens. For every animal of the forest is mine. And the cattle on a thousand.

[28:01] Hills. If I were hungry. I wouldn't tell you. For the world is mine. And all that is in it. In other words. What could you give him. That was not already his. He doesn't need you.

He's self-sufficient. So far is this God. From needing anything from his creatures. That it's rather him. Who supplies all their needs. Life. Life. Life. Breath. Breath. Everything else.

So he doesn't need what you have. But you really need what he has. That's the point that Paul is making about the true and living God.

He's self-sufficient. And then fourthly. From one man he made every nation of men. From one man he made every nation of men.

And that would include these proud Athenian Greeks. Who thought that the Greeks were a superior race. They had a saying that the Greeks had sprung forth from the earth.

[29:01] As if they were unique from all the other peoples of the world. They had just sprouted forth from the earth. Paul cuts them down to size. Saying no.

You share the very same ancestor that everyone else on the planet has. You have the same ancestor with every other nation of men on earth.

We've all descended from one man. We know him as Adam. From Genesis. We all belong to the one race.

The human race. Can you see how that leaves no room for racial prejudice and pride? That's where Paul's going with these proud Athenians.

That's where he needs to go with us. May the church of Christ demonstrate to a nation this same truth. A nation that's reeling with prejudice and hatred.

[30:00] We're all from the same father Adam. And God wanted the whole earth inhabited by men. And so he didn't create them just to inhabit the garden.

But sent them to fill the earth. As his created image bears. And so as the ruler of the earth. He determines the time set for them. The exact places where they should live.

He puts up one ruler and tears down another. He's no distant ruler who left things to mankind. No. He's ruling. He's lord over all. And he rules over the migrations of people.

And the masses that are leaving Syria. And are leaving Iraq. And other places on the earth. He is sovereign over all these migrations of people.

The times. The places. Where they live. He's fulfilling his plan. And he's kindly governed all things. So that eight billion people are being fed every day.

[30:59] He causes his rain to fall. And his sun to shine. Such that everybody eats. And all of this kind ruling of his world. Is done so that.

Men might seek him. And reach out for him. And find him. Though he's not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move.

And have our being. As some of your own prophets have said. We are his offspring. We've come from him. In other words. There is a God to find.

And he's not hard to find. For he's not far from each one of us. In fact. You should be very aware of him. You eat from his hand. Every day. You take your next breath from his hand.

You bump into him all day long. You live in his world. You walk on his estate. You breathe his air. You're refreshed by his sunshine and rain. And he made us in his image.

[32:00] But the problem is. You didn't want this God. And so you created gods. That you did want.

Idols. Representatives. Of false gods. But you see. Since we are his offspring. You shouldn't think. That we can make him.

Our offspring. The work of our hands. No. We're the work of his hands. And by your idols. You are. You are making him. The work of your hands. He made us in his image.

And we must not make him out. To be in our image. Or like other images. Of gold. And silver. And stone. Paul says. That's sheer. Ignorance. Idolatry. Is sheer. Ignorance. It's to be out of touch. With reality. With the way things really are. And he says. In the past. God overlooked such ignorance.

[32 : 59] In the past. God. Did not immediately punish. The nations. He was drawing his people. From one nation. Israel. In the past. And he let the rest of the nations.

Go their own ways. And what was their own way? Their own way. Was to reject. The one true and living God. And to make idols. And to create their own false gods. Yes. In the past. God overlooked. He did not immediately. Come with judgment. But now. But now. He commands all people. Everywhere. To repent.

Now that God has made. An even clearer revelation. Of himself. Than the creation. For he has sent. His one and only son. In whom dwells. All the fullness. Of the deity. He is the image. Of the invisible God. And he visited. Your planet. He walked among us. Here. Is what God is like. In Jesus Christ. You will see him. And now.

[33 : 55] He is sending his preachers. Into the ends of the earth. To call men. To repent. Now. He commands. All people. Everywhere. To repent. So the little man.

Whose philosophy. Was on trial. By the Athenians. Has. Turned the tables. Hasn't. Now. Now. Who's on trial. They are. Now.

Who's guilty. Of rebellion. Against their maker. They are. Rebellion. Against. The one. Who rules. Over all. They are. Rebelling.

Against the one. Who commands. All people. Everywhere. To repent. And to do so. For a very good reason. And that's the fifth reason.

Because he is the judge. Of all. He's the judge of all. He's not only the maker of all. The ruler of all. But he's the judge of all. And this is Paul's final word. And it's a reminder.

[34 : 56] Of what their own conscience. Is telling them. That their maker will be their judge. And he gives five points. About this coming day of judgment.

Five points. About the coming day of judgment. All in verse 31. First of all. The date of judgment. For he. That is this God. That made you.

And rules over you. He has set a day. When he will judge the world. So that day. Is already determined. It's already on the divine calendar. It's there. It can't be changed.

Can't be altered. It's fixed. It's appointed. Unto man. Once to die. Your day of death. Is appointed. It's fixed.

Next. And so is the judgment. That will follow. Now we're a week closer. To that day. I can't tell you when it is. For God has not revealed.

[35 : 51] I know this. We are. A week closer. Than we were last Sunday. And there will come a day. As sure as this day came. When it will be judgment day. The day on God's calendar.

He has set a day. A day. When he will judge the world. Secondly. Who are the ones to be judged. He will judge the world. Now again. He's been talking in very universal terms.

Hasn't he? God created the world. And everything. God rules the world. As its Lord. And now God will judge the world. The maker of all.

Will be judge of all. The one that made you. Will judge you. All the nations. Will be gathered before him. All who have ever lived. None will be missing. It cannot be avoided.

For we must all appear. Before the judgment seat of Christ. His angels. Will be sent out. To gather us. And to bring us there. The ones to be judged.

[36 : 48] The world. Thirdly. How he will judge. Or the manner of his judgment. And this is critical for us to know. If we're going to go stand before this judge. We ought to know something about it. I dare say.

If we had a court date. And we were to appear before a judge. And perhaps the potential penalty. Was life imprisonment. We want to know something about the judge. That we're going to stand before. Well we need to know something.

About how it's going to go in this day. How will the judgment proceed? Well he will judge the world. With justice. With justice.

With perfect equity. Perfect righteousness. Now in this life. True justice is rarely reached. And that's because.

All the facts are rarely known. Not all the outward actions. Much less the thoughts and motives. Of people's hearts. But you see.

[37 : 47] At this judgment. There will be no coloring of the facts. There will be no twisting of the truth. No tampering with the evidence. No bribing of the witness. Nothing in all creation. Is hidden from God's sight.

Everything is uncovered. And laid bare before the eyes. Of him. To whom we must give. An account. And so he who knows all the facts. Who knows all the motives. And intents of the heart. Is the one who will meet out. A perfect. Judgment. It will be just. And when he. Meets out his judgment. Every mouth will be stopped. Absolutely no one. Will come away from judgment day. Saying it's not fair. No he will have stopped. Every mouth. And the world will be shown. For the guilt that they had. And everyone will see that. Let God be true. And every man a liar. His judgment.

[38 : 42] Is just. And all will see and know. The strict justice. Of God display. Now you need to know this. About God's justice. If you're going to judgment.

And we've just seen that. We all must appear. You need to know this. God's justice requires. That every sin. Be punished. Without.

Exception. That's justice. It must. Be punished. It is such an offense against God. He cannot just overlook it.

He didn't overlook the idolatry. Of the old test. He just. Prolonged the judgment. There's coming a day. When he will. Bring. The idolatry. Of the nations. And of individuals.

To justice. Because. God's justice. Requires. That every sin. Be punished. No. He's.

[39 : 37] He's. The maker. He's the ruler. He's the judge. So he can decide. The basis of justice. Or the basis of judgment. And the judge of all the earth. Has ordained two ways.

That sin. Will be punished. First of all. It will be punished. By individuals. Themselves. In hell. Forever. Or secondly.

The second way. Is by Jesus Christ. To be punished. As a substitute. Sacrifice. In the place. Of the guilty sinner. One of those two ways. Is how. Every sin.

Must be punished. So if the day of judgment. Uncovers. Even one. Of your sins. You will be punished. Forever. In hell. For it. Because your rebellion.

Against an infinite. Eternal God. Will take an infinite. Eternal. Amount of time. To pay off that debt. You'll never. Get out of.

[40 : 33] Hell. That's. What justice is. So if you don't have any sin. You have nothing. To worry about. But if you have. Any sin. You have everything.

To fear. Because. Justice requires. That sin. Be punished. He will. Give to. Every man. Exactly. What they have coming. That. And no more. And no less. But the scriptures. Revealed. That. God the judge. Has. Has a kind.

And a loving heart. For sinners. So much. So. That he said. I am going to devise. Another way. That I will punish sin.

I will send. My one and only son. My eternal son. Who we now know. As Jesus Christ. Into the world. And he will be. The sacrifice. He will be the substitute.

[41 : 30] To step in. For my people. All those who will. Ever put their trust in me. They are mine. And I have chosen them. And I will put. All of their sins. Upon my substitute.

And then. I will wreak. Punishment. Upon him. For their sins. So God. Made him. Who had no sin. To be sin. For us.

And then Jesus. Bore those sins. In his body. To the tree. Where Christ. Died for sins. Once for all. The righteous. For the unrighteous. To bring us.

To God. God. And since he. Bore those sins. And took the full. Punishment. Of God. Upon them. If we are in Christ.

There is therefore. Now no condemnation. For us. And when we come. To the judgment seat. Of Christ. All of our sins. Will be gone.

[42 : 28] Buried. Buried. Into the depths. Of the sea. Covered. With the blood. Of Jesus Christ. For the blood. Of Jesus. God's son. Cleanses. From every sin.

My sin. Not in part. But the whole. Was nailed. To his cross. And I bear it. No more. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Oh my soul. It's gone. My sins are gone.

I stand before him. Righteous. As if I'd never sinned. But had always obeyed. Because my sins. Have been taken. By Jesus. He got the punishment. Of hell for it. And his righteousness. Has been given to me. And I get the reward. For his obedience. So you must know. That the manner of judgment. Of the last day. Is perfect justice. And perfect justice. Demands that sins. Be paid for. That sins. Be punished. But only punished. Once. And there is.

[43 : 26] How the justice of God. Becomes good news. For those who are in Christ. Because if they've been punished. Once. In my substitute. Sacrifice hands. They will not be.

Punished again. At my hand. And so the justice of God. Is. Is a glorious thing. For the believer. If we confess our sins. He is faithful.

And just. To forgive us. Our sins. And to cleanse us. From all. He would be unjust. To punish us. Having punished. His own son. And that's why his son.

Will plead for us. Father look on me. And pardon. Him. Pardon her. Remember I. I was crushed. I was damned. For her. Blessed gospel.

Justice. Will be served. And praise God. That's what was served. On the cross. By Jesus Christ. For everyone. Who cast. Their hope. Upon him alone. For life.

[44 : 24] Of the judgment. Who will judge. He will judge. The world. With justice. By the man. He has appointed. You see the one. Who appointed the day.

Also appointed the man. And he's described as. The man whom he raised. From the dead. The Lord Jesus Christ.

The very Jesus. That Paul has been preaching. In Athens. The father has given him. Authority to judge. Because he is. The son of man. And the proof of judgment. How can we be sure.

That judgment will go on. God has given proof of this. To all men. By raising him from the dead. Did you ever know. And think of the resurrection. Of Jesus. As a proof. That judgment day. Will go on. As planned. You see. Mankind thought. They were done. With the judge. They crucified him. Condemned him. Crucified him. Killed him. Put him in the grave. That's the end. Of the judge. You see. Not so fast.

[45 : 22] God says. And raises him. From the dead. As a proof. To the whole world. That he's going to judge. The whole world. By this man. Jesus Christ. That he's raised. From the dead.

And the outcome. Of that judgment. Will be eternal life. For those in Christ. And eternal damnation. For those outside of him. Well what was the response? There's the message. And as you can see. It's the same message.

In its essence. Isn't it? It's the Bible. It's the gospel. But what was the response? All people everywhere. Were commanded to repent. And that included.

These Greeks and Athens. But when they heard. Of the resurrection of the dead. Some of them sneered. They laughed. And poked fun. At Paul. Most of these.

Philosophers. Could imagine. The immortality of the soul. The immaterial part of man. Living on forever. They could imagine that. But they could not. None of them. Could imagine. That the actual physical body.

[46 : 21] After it has died. And been decomposed. In death. That it could actually. Live again. Nonsense. We've never seen it happen. We've never proven it.

In our laboratories. It's folly. To believe. And they sneered at him. And mocked him. Others. Were more polite. Said. We'd like to hear. More about this.

Later. And so Paul left the council. A few followed him. And became followers of Paul. And believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers. You'll meet them. One day.

You'll meet a guy named Dionysius. who was a member of this Athenian. Court of ideas. And this woman. Damaris. And a number of others.

Not many. It was not a great revival. That broke out in Athens. And after this. Paul left Athens. And he goes on to Corinth. And we never read of Paul. Returning to Athens. We never read of him.

[47 : 16] Planning a church in Athens. Yet. What's the worth of one? A Damaris. Of two. Dionysius. Of a few others. When you think of eternal. Men and women.

Who will live forever. Either in heaven or hell. This was a glorious. Salvation. That came to Athens. A few words of application. And we're done. All people everywhere.

Includes you and me. And God now commands. All people everywhere. To repent. To turn from our sin. From our idolatry. Right now.

Right here. Right now. You're under the immediate duty. To leave all those things. That you have put in God's place. As more important to you than God. Idols.

But idols are also images. That represent false gods. And these gods have no existence. Except in the minds of the worshiper. And Athens was full of them. And America is also full of them.

[48:17] Not so much in statutes of gold. And silver. And silver. And stone. But false gods. That have been erected. In the minds. Of Americans. There's a rapidly growing number.

Of Americans. Who when asked on a survey. A religious survey. Of what their religion is. Are checking the box. Of none. So there's the survey. And are you a Christian?

Judaism? Islam? Hinduism? Buddhism? There it is. And you check the box. And then other perhaps. And then non.

Non-religious. Or none. And that box is getting checked. At an alarmingly increasing rate. So much so that in America today. One out of five adults.

Checks the non-box. One out of three. Adults. Below 30. Check the non-box. The new generation.

[49:17] Is a non. Religiously affiliated. Generation. And so I was listening to a woman. And that doesn't mean that they're necessarily. Agnostic.

Or atheist. Maybe a third of them are agnostic. Or atheist. The greater part of them still believe in God. But their concept of God. Cannot. Be affiliated with. The Christian God.

The Jewish God. The Buddhist God. The Islam's God. On and on. No. That's not. The way God is. So they are non.

And so I was listening to this interview. With a woman author. Who was writing on this phenomenon. And. She tells how her child came home from school one day.

Evidently they talked about the world's religions. And she said to her. Or this child said to her mother. Mom. What are we? And she said we're nothing. We're nothing.

[50:11] She said the words kind of stung my ears. When I said it. We're nothing. She grew up Presbyterian. Her husband grew up Jewish.

But they're now nothings. And so she explained on this interview. The causes of a sharp increase. In those who are nothings. They don't identify with any religion.

And the story of a woman in California. Made the cause clear. She had checked the box Christian for many years. A faithful church. Church woman.

And yet. She said. When my minister stopped talking about love and good deeds. And instead started teaching against homosexuality and abortion.

He lost me to the nuns. That's where I checked it. I checked it. And walked away. Now what made her leave? The idea that God makes moral demands.

[51:11] Of his creatures. That he's actually the ruler. Of all that he's made. That he defines what's morally right and wrong for his creatures.

Who tells what I can and cannot do with my body. He has that right. He's made me. He's my ruler. He will one day judge me. But she rejected all of that. And she created.

God of her own. Who was a God of all love. God who doesn't make moral demands. And who for sure will not judge anyone for their decisions. That's their business. That's their business.

She did what the Athenians did. They rejected the one true God. And they created gods that they could live with. But I want to ask.

Where do those gods exist? Where do they live? Nowhere. They are non-gods. They only have existence in the mind of their worshipers.

[52:17] And so her image of God did not match up with any of the convenient boxes of the religions of the world. And so she identifies as non-religious.

Which gives her the freedom to create a God of her own. Tailor made to her own liking. God as she likes him to be. A God she can live with. Can manipulate. Can manage.

A God who does not interfere with her life and choices. That is as much idolatry as ever reigned in Athens. Creating false gods.

It's rejecting the true and living God. The maker and ruler and judge of all. And in the past, yes, God overlooked such ignorance. And did not bring swift judgment.

But now things have changed. Christ has come. The glory has broken into time and been revealed. And now everyone.

[53:17] All people everywhere. Are commanded to repent and to bow down and worship the son. S-O-N. How quickly the God of the Bible has become the unknown God of America.

He's the unknown God. And people are flocking to shrines and churches today. Worshiping the unknown God. Gods that they have created in their own minds.

It's all about love. No moral categories. No moral laws. No judgment. To go to our neighbor to tell him the truth about God.

That he is the maker and ruler and judge of all things. To tell him about his son. The one way of salvation that he would send his son because of love for this poor rotten world.

Idolaters, rebels, everyone. And would call them to be forgiven through faith in his son. And to issue to them that call of repentance and faith.

[54:52] May the Lord help us to be faithful to him. In this idolatrous world that we live in. Let's pray. Lord we ask you for ears to hear your word.

And eyes to see your glory. And we thank you for giving that to us. We thank you for the way that your glory fills the earth. And the way Jesus Christ is the revelation of your glory.

And how he has perfectly served justice's demands for our sins. As we trust in him. Thank you for such a salvation.

Thank you for such a savior. Pity this poor world. This poor nation of ours. That has rejected you.

And is creating gods of their own. Things more important to them than you.

And things infinitely belittling you. Never open our eyes more and more. To see the greatness of the God that you are. And the wonder of your salvation in Jesus Christ.

[56:03] Use us. To pray for and to go into our world. And to declare your glory. And the gospel that saves. We ask in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.