



World Christian Fellowship

www.wcflondon.com
wcflondon@gmail.com

Acts 17:16-23

Acts 17:16-23, *Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.¹⁷ Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.¹⁸ Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, “What does this babbler want to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,” because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.*

¹⁹ And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? ²⁰ For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean.” ²¹ For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. ²² Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; ²³ for as I was passing through and considering the

objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:

TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:

Background:

Paul first Missionary journey begins in **Acts 14** with Barnabas.

They travel and establish churches in

Iconium,

Lystra,

Derbe,

Antioch.

They return back to Jerusalem to discuss whether the Christians should follow the Jewish traditions or not.

Paul begins his second missionary journey with Luke, Timothy, and Silas.

Macedonian Call in **Acts 16**.

They come to Philippi and preach the Gospel.

They were imprisoned.

Luke stays back at Philippi.

Paul comes to Thessalonica stays there for 3 weeks with Timothy and Silas.

Paul, Timothy, and Silas reach Berea.

Problem there so Paul was sent in the middle of the night in the sea to Athens.

Acts 17:14-15, *Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there. ¹⁵So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed.*

This is the first time Paul is all alone in the ministry!
Lowest point in his life.

Athens, in the **4th & 5th Century B.C.**, was the greatest city in the world and maybe never has been equalled since.

Athens is known for
Art,
Literature,
Architecture, and
Philosophy.

Athens in those years has never had a match.

Athens is in Greece, was in the province of Achaëa. Corinth was the capital of the province, but Athens was the major city, in fact, in all the world of that day.

At one time in the – in terms of culture, Rome had become the political centre. Athens had lost a little of its political glow that it had when Greece ruled the world under Alexander. But Athens hadn't lost any of its intellectual or philosophical or religious primacy.

Historians said that Athens, at the time of Paul, was the intellectual centre and the university of the world.

The minds of that part of the world congregated in Athens. A proud city that it even called its university the **Eye of Greece** and **the Mother of Arts**.

The council house housed a statue of Apollo and Jupiter. Some comments were made such as, "You can easily find a god in Athens rather than a man." Gods were everywhere.

Socrates and Plato were from Athens. Athens was the adopted city of Aristotle. Epicurus, who founded the Epicureans; and Zeno, who founded the Stoics.

How do you see?

V 16, *Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.*

Paul was waiting!
His spirit was provoked.

What you would have done in Athens?

Sightseeing trip?

Paul even quotes their own poet in **V28**.

V 28, *for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'*

First quote is from **Aratus**.

Second quote is from **Epimenides**.

Do you know what impressed Paul?

He didn't say, "look at that building, this is terrific. I like this art.

He looked over Athens, and he said, "I have one comment about this city, and it is full of idols." That was his own comment.

When he looked at the city full of idols it brought such a provoke that he can't wait for his companion to join him.

Paul had the ability to look beyond the cultural facade and see the reality of men's hearts. There's not a line in Paul's writings about architecture.

Just to show you the difference let me share something from the history.

After Paul had this visit there is a person name Pausanias, visited and he was overwhelmed by the art and the architecture of the great city of Athens he wrote books about it.

Do you know how many volumes of books he wrote?

6 Volumes!

We usually are satisfied with the face value, but Paul saw past to the spiritual issue.

A mason looks at the great building what is his thought?

A carpenter visits a palace what is his thought?

A car mechanic sees a car what is his thoughts?

A foodie looks at the something what crosses his thoughts?

You are being spiritual should have the thoughts of spiritual things.

1 Samuel 16:7, *But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”*

Revelation 3:17, *Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—*

V 23, *for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:*

Paul could see their ignorance!

Nehemiah:

Nehemiah was just a cup bearer to the king.

When he heard the news about the status of the city is in, he went for fasting and praying.

When he heard the news, it impacted him.
It changed completely.

King could notice that and then he was granted passage to Jerusalem.

When he reached Jerusalem, he did not stay in his quarters and enjoying life.

Nehemiah 2:11-18, *So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. ¹²Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode. ¹³And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. ¹⁴Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass. ¹⁵So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. ¹⁶And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work. ¹⁷Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach." ¹⁸And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to this good work.*

There must be unparalleled provocation in your spirit.

Moses:

Exodus 32:19-20, *So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. ²⁰Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder; and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it.*

Moses was so angry that he broke the tablets which God Himself wrote.

Phinehas.

Israel's harlotry act at Moab brought judgement upon the nation.

Numbers 25:6-13, *And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. ⁷Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; ⁸and*

he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. ⁹And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand.

¹⁰Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ¹¹“Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. ¹²Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; ¹³and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.’ ”

How could you have such an eye for God?

1 Corinthians 10:31, *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

2 Corinthians 4:15, *For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.*

Do you see the glory of God in everything?

Philippians 2:9-11, *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

One God who deserves all the glory!

1 Timothy 2:4-5, *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, ⁴who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,*

What made Elijah so angry?

1 Kings 19:10, *So he said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."*

1 Kings 18:21, *And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word.*

David had such a zeal for God.

Psalms 69:9, *Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.*

Do you know who quoted that psalm later?

Jesus.

When He cleared the temple, He got angry in the temple, and He threw them out, and He started smashing and throwing tables over.

Let me close with this.

Jeremiah 20:8-13, *For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, "Violence and plunder!" Because the word of the Lord was made to me A reproach and a derision daily. ⁹Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak anymore in His name." But His word was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not. ¹⁰For I heard many mocking: "Fear on every side!" "Report," they say, "and we will report it!" All my acquaintances watched for my stumbling, saying, "Perhaps he can be induced; Then we will prevail against him, And we will take our revenge on him." ¹¹But the Lord is with me as a mighty, awesome One. Therefore my persecutors will stumble, and will not prevail. They will be greatly ashamed, for they will not prosper. Their everlasting confusion will never be forgotten. ¹²But, O Lord of hosts, You who test the righteous, And see the mind and heart, Let me see*

Your vengeance on them; For I have pleaded my cause before You. ¹³Sing to the Lord! Praise the Lord! For He has delivered the life of the poor From the hand of evildoers.

How can we see all around of us the name of God is being blasphemed and still be quiet?