

PAUL'S SERMON ON THE HILL

Acts 17:15-34.

LESSON 133 -- Primary Course

MEMORY VERSE: "In him we live" (Acts 17:28).

BIBLE TEXT

Acts 17:15-34.

15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

16 ¶ Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

21 (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.)

22 ¶ Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and

earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

28 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.

29 Forasmuch then as we are 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.

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the 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 him from the dead.

32 ¶ And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.

33 So Paul departed from among them.

34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Paul's Salvation

We remember that Paul had gone to school and studied hard when he was a boy. Although he learned his lessons well, he did not learn to love Jesus in school, and after he had gone through school he did not work for Jesus. But one day Jesus sent a bright light to Paul; and

when Paul was sorry for his sins and prayed, Jesus saved him. His whole life was changed, and from that very day he loved Jesus and taught many people to be saved.

The City of Athens

In today's lesson we find Paul going to the city of Athens in the land of Greece. He wanted to teach the people in Athens about Jesus. In this city there were beautiful groves of olive trees, winding paths, fountains, and a salt-spring, which to the people of long ago was a holy place. There were long flights of marble steps, temples of marble, picture and art galleries, and great schools where many people learned a great deal. But, like Paul, these people did not learn of Jesus in the schools. Instead of worshiping Jesus, the people in Athens worshiped idols. The idols of long ago were images of men and animals carved from gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, and stone. But these false gods could not see, hear, speak or do anything for the people.

When Paul arrived in Athens he found much to do. The people had to be taught to love and worship God instead of idols. Paul needed his helpers, so he called for Silas and Timothy to come at once. While he waited for them he preached in the Jews' church and talked to the people in the busy markets.

Mars' Hill

One day Paul met some men who believed that the greatest thing in life was just having a good time. They should have been wise for they had gone to school a long time. But perhaps they had never heard about Jesus; for they, too, worshiped idols. They did not pay much attention to Paul's words but called him a babbler. Then Paul was taken to a place called Mars' hill. This was a high, rocky hill where a group of men sat who acted as judges to decide questions of religion. For many, many years this place had been used for this purpose, and sometimes criminals were taken to Mars' hill for trial. The people said to Paul something like this, "You are bringing certain strange stories to us, and we want to know what you are talking about." Perhaps they were not interested in learning about Jesus, but just wanted to hear something new.

"THE UNKNOWN GOD"

Then Paul stood up among the people on Mars' hill and told them about the only true and living God. He said, "As I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." Paul said he would now tell them of this unknown God. So he preached about God the Father and Jesus Christ, His Son. Paul told the people that when we are saved we are all the children of God, and He wants to be a kind and loving Father unto us. So if God is our Father, we must not think of Him as an image carved out of gold, silver, or stone. He wants everyone to repent of his sins and be saved, because someday we shall all stand before God who will decide whether our life has been good or evil.

Rejected

But when these men of Athens, who thought they were wise, heard Paul tell of Jesus and His death and resurrection, they mocked Paul. Others said, "We will hear thee again of this matter."

How sad to think that they did not believe in Jesus, and would not let Him come into their hearts and wash away their sins! They were not like the jailer who trembled and said, "What must I do to be saved?" Nor did they have a hungry heart like the little man, Zacchæus who scrambled down from a tree and received Jesus joyfully. This may have been the last chance the men of Athens had to be saved, for we do not read that Paul was ever again in their city. Only a few people there believed the Story of Jesus.

Love for Jesus

Even today in some faraway lands the people still bow down and worship idols. We should be very thankful that we live in a land where people can know and learn about Jesus. We have the Bible, God's holy Word, and it teaches us about Jesus.

Let us be careful to love Him with all our heart. We must not love anything more than we love Jesus; for if we do, it becomes an idol in our life. In our land, people do not bow down to images or statutes, but a great many people have no time for Jesus. If we let our work or our play take up all our time, we will crowd Jesus out of our heart.

Have you met this God who was unknown in Athens or is He a stranger to you, too? In order really to know God, you must let Him come into your heart. When he saves you, His love fills your soul, and Jesus is no longer unknown to you. The salvation of your soul is the most important thing in life.

Let us not turn Jesus away when He knocks at the door of our heart. We must not say, as the people in Athens said, "We will hear thee again." Jesus may be knocking at our heart today. Let us open wide the door of our heart and say:

**"Into my heart, into my heart,
Come into my heart, Lord Jesus:
Come in today, Come in to stay,
Come into my heart, Lord Jesus."**

QUESTIONS

1. Did the people in Athens worship God? Acts 17:16.
2. Did Paul tell the people about the unknown God? Acts 17:23-31.
3. Did they believe the Story of Jesus? Acts 17:32.
4. Is God pleased with people who worship idols? Exodus 20:3-6; I John 5:21.
5. Whom should we love with all our heart? Mark 12:30.

LESSON RESOURCES

TOPIC

PAUL'S SERMON ON THE HILL

Lesson 133

Acts 17:15-34

MUSIC

Tell Me The Stories Of Jesus

WATCH & PRAY 152

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SONG

Tell Me The Stories Of Jesus

Tell me the stories of Jesus I love to hear;
Things I would ask Him to tell me
If He were here;
Scenes by the wayside, Tales of the sea,
Stories of Jesus, Tell them to me.

PICTURE

