

A generation or two ago, it would have been inconceivable for you or I to have a conversation with someone who knew nothing about Jesus. But that is not the case today. A lot has changed in a relatively short period of time, and as the gap between Christianity and our society widens, we Christians will continue to find ourselves encountering situations and attitudes that were on a large scale foreign to our parents and grandparents, and yet were very familiar to those faced by the early church in Acts.

Our passage this morning from Act 17 then, can be helpful for modern believers who are wondering, as we all should. How does the church engage the culture? In these verses, we find not only the missionary mindset we've come to expect of the Apostle Paul, but elements of that mindset that all Christians would do well to adopt. Given our current cultural realities.

Our father, we do again come to sit under your word and to hear from you. So speak to us through these timeless pages. These eternal words of yours may their truth penned so long ago, resonate in our hearts and minds this day. For your glory in Christ's name. Amen. When we left the story of Paul's second missionary journey last week, the rabble from Thessalonica had ventured over to Berea to stir up the crowds against the message that the Apostle was preaching.

So Paul was whisked away to safety in the city of Athens, and there he awaits for his helpers, Silas and Timothy, to catch up to him. That's where we pick up the plot this morning in the city of Athens, Greece. As Paul waits for his co laborers in the Gospel to come to him, he spends at least part of his time alone observing his new surroundings.

Athens was not a hugely populated city at this time, but it was still a cultural center in the region. It held the Acropolis from the mid four hundreds B.C. and the Parthenon, a temple dedicated to the goddess Athena. Athens had been home to the Greek philosophers, Socrates and Plato and Aristotle and many others. It was a place of ornate structures and and sculptures and art, and it was to some at least the university center, the intellectual center of the world in those days, a destination for scholars and students alike.

And even though by now Athens is past its prime, past its glory, by the time of Paul's arrival, there's still an ethos in Athens. Its inhabitants are proud to be Athenians. As Paul strolled around the city, he saw that it was full of idols. And in this case we're talking about literal idols, statues, figurines, sculpted creations intended to represent some kind of deity.

Now, not all idols are physical. We just finished a class in our Sunday school, Idols of the Heart. And in that class we learned that an idol can be literal and physical, but it can also be spiritual. An idol is anything apart from God that we turn to in order to feel happy or fulfilled. Relaxed or secure.

An idol is whatever one puts his or her true faith in. That is not God. And Athens is full of idols. The King James version says it was wholly given to idolatry. And it doesn't seem like this is an exaggeration. Historians have speculated there were more statues of the gods in Athens at that time than in all the rest of Greece.

And one wrote that it was easier to meet a God or a goddess on the main street of Athens than it was to meet a man. The population of the city is about 10,000 people, and it is believed to have been home to 30,000 idols. So as Paul walks the streets of Athens, he takes it all in. He sees it with his own eyes.

And what he saw would naturally lead to what he would feel, because that's how it works. That's how we are wired by God. We see something and we respond to it. We see and we

process it. Although that doesn't have to take a long time before we feel we see. We think we feel. Sometimes what we see leads us to joy, sometimes it leads us to sorrow, sometimes to anger.

But we see and then we feel. And that's just the way that Jesus did it in Matthew's gospel. Ninth chapter, verse 35 and 36, Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them. He saw and he felt because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

So as Paul looks over all this rampant idolatry of Athens, he sees this city full of idols. And the Scripture tells us his spirit was provoked within him. And that word translated provoked is from that same word that described Paul and Barnabas disagreement, a sharp and passionate response. Seeing all these hand made images, these figurines, these manmade representations of perceived deities, Paul is impacted.

He's moved in his spirit. Why would that be? Why would it matter so much to him? Why would Paul's spirit be stirred by the abundance of idolatry in Athens? Well, he was, as we know, a Hebrew of Hebrews, well versed in the teachings of the Old Testament. He knew there is one God, and we should worship him and him alone, and we should have no other gods before him. Does that sound familiar to you? From Exodus chapter 20. He knew the teaching of God's Word that idolatry is not only forbidden, but it is futile. He was acquainted with the same warning that idols are powerless and those who worship them become like them. He knew that to serve an idol was to revere something is God that is not God.

And to bow to an idol is to trust in and worship something that not only can't deliver on what is hoped for, but is much less than what we all were made to worship and serve. Every idol that Paul passed by. Affirmed. On the one hand, the General human belief in need of and capacity for God and for worship.

And on the other, the fact that all this worship is misdirected. It has been rightly said that there is a God shaped hole in all of us that only God can fill. And we know that we've experienced that hole. And we've probably also tried to fill it up with things that were not God. So we can empathize here in Athens.

The citizens are trying to fill the God shaped hole they have in their heart with their many manmade handmade gods. And when they do this, they are depriving the true God of the glory that he deserves, and they're depriving themselves of the relationship that he wants to have with them. So Paul's heart beats for the glory of God and the good of others.

There are two commandments a love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. And a second is like unto it that you should one love your neighbor as yourself. When we think what's going on with Paul, what's going on with Paul is he's following these commandments. He loves God and he sees God being disrespected.

He loves others, and he sees others falling short of what God wants for them. You see, he saw and then he felt. So let me ask you, friend, when you stroll through the the streets of your town, what do you see? What do you feel? This can be difficult in familiar surroundings. Candidate Paul had the privilege of showing up in Athens as a traveler.

He went there as a visitor. If you've traveled much, you know that part of the fun of traveling is one. Seeing the sights. Taking it all in. You're looking around. You're intentionally viewing

everything. Maybe you remember your first trip to a big city coming from this place. Your first trip to a big city. Your first view of a sky scraper.

Maybe you could not believe how green the grass was at Fenway Park.

Maybe you recall your first visit to a third world country, and you were confronted there with overwhelming poverty, littered roads, mangy animals, the smell of burning trash. As visitors, we can be observant, but when we live in the same place for a while, when we walk the same paths, we might not see or be moved by what the traveler sees.

It's kind of like I think we can relate to this. It's kind of like those items in our house that are in disrepair that we know exist. Maybe a missing piece of baseboard or a broken cabinet door or a light that's been out for about six months. And instead of fixing these things, we learn to live with them, don't we?

We step over them. We walk past them. We can get used to we can easily get comfortable with the brokenness that we encounter every single day. The story is told of a pastor who just accepted a call to an inner city church, and one of his parishioners entered his study and found him standing at his study window, weeping as he looked out over the inner cities.

Tragic conditions. And the man sought to console his pastor. He said, Don't worry. After you've been here a while, you'll get used to it. To which the minister responded, Yes, I know. That's why I'm crying. There's a danger in not seeing. There's a danger in turning a blind eye to the world's brokenness. There's a danger in getting used to the conditions around us that speak to the lostness of people and their ignorance of the true God.

As lawlessness increases, the Bible promises men's hearts will grow cold. As sin becomes more and more prevalent, more and more accepted as normal. We run the risk, really, of seeing less and feeling less. Paul saw, Paul felt and Paul responded. What he saw and what he felt led him to act. Verse 17. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.

And there's that word that we saw from last week, reasoned dialog, conversation, discussion, making the case for Jesus face to face. Paul goes to the synagogue, which has been his pattern, but not only is he going to the synagogue, he's going also to the agora, He's going to the marketplace, he's going he's going every day to talk with whoever will talk with him about the Lord.

Now, it is so obvious here that it probably doesn't need saying, but I do want you to note that Paul is out and about. In other words, he's in Athens and he's in a strange city, but he's not holed up in the hotel. He's not sequestered away working on his next epistle because making disciples, which is what he's all about, making disciples, requires going out.

And I read that. And to be honest, to be completely honest with you, that challenges me. You know why that challenges me? Because I like staying in. I really do. I love my life. I love my home. I love my wife. These are my favorite things. And I like staying in. I'm not comfortable with strangers. I really don't like big crowds.

I am the guy against the wall with his piece of fudge waiting for it to be over. I am not the guy who asked the waitress for her name, and I don't even like to be with that guy who asks the waitress for her name, let alone her story. Just an iced tea, please. Those are my preferences, but some of those preferences have to change for Jesus.

Maybe you can relate to that. Maybe that's you. And some of you don't have any of those issues whatsoever. You are the guy that mortified me. When we go out. But either way, how are you?

How are we going to engage the culture? How are we going to be sharing the gospel with people if we don't go out where the people are?

Paul is out and about. He sees and he feels and what he feels leads him to act. And I'm I'm afraid that too many in our society, they believe that having the right feelings about a situation is all that is required. That's that's as far as we need to go. In other words, we see injustice and we feel bad about it.

We see prejudice and we feel awful. We watch a country that is just sliding with increasing speed into gross immorality. And we are grieved. And those feelings that we have prove that we have a heart, that we are good people, that we are concerned people. But let me ask you, friend, what are we doing? What are we doing?

What benefit is the right emotion if there's no accompanying motion? God doesn't just call us to be sentimental, only he calls us to act, seeing with his eyes, feeling with his heart. He calls us then to shine his light, to spread his love, and to make a difference in this world with the way that we live and wherever we are moved.

If you are moved about something the way that the Apostle Paul was, wherever we are moved friends there, we can serve. That's an indicator. This is something you're passionate about. This is something you care about. Here is an opportunity for you. That's what Paul does. He sees the problem of the false gods and he goes right to work witnessing for the true God.

Now who does he talk to? The answer is whoever, whoever would listen, whoever who happened to be where he was, the Jews, the devout seekers, but also some philosophers, Some philosophers whose description in the text probably means little to nothing to us epicureans and stoics. But let me let me give you a real brief and not 100% the best, but a real brief overview of these two schools of thought, because it plays in later to how Paul would preach.

The Epicureans were, by and large atheist. Most of them didn't believe in the existence of God. Those who might believe in the existence of God would believe that any gods out there would be far off that would be having little to no interest in the ordinary comings and goings of humans They had no motivation to seek after a god they didn't believe in.

They were not concerned at all about God's judgment. They were materialists in the sense that they believe that this life is all there is. And they said that death is the end and they understood pleasure to be the chief end of life. And for them, a life of pleasure is one that is free from pain, free from distressing emotions, superstitions, fears, anxiety about death.

And so the epicureans promoted sort of an intellectual detachment from the cares of life. We're just going to sort of intellectually fly above all this stuff in order not to be upset in order to have a life of pleasure. The Stoics were different that this school of philosophy emphasized human rationality, individual self-sufficiency, moral worth and duty. They believe reason and logic were the principles that should govern the lives of people.

The Stoics were pantheistic. They believed that God was in everything. He's in the rocks, he's in the trees. They deny that he exists as a separate entity, but they think he's in all material things. Now, the point here is not for us to become acquainted with different views on the meaning of life, but to see this that Paul is conversing with people who hold these wide ranging and diverse views.

He's not ruling anybody out because of what they think or how they understand. And sometimes we could do that. We could say, well, this guy doesn't believe that and she doesn't

believe this. And so there's really no sense to have a conversation. And I just want to point out to you that Paul is talking to anyone about Jesus.

He's talking with the Jews and the God fearing Gentiles in the synagogue. He's talking with the common folk and with the tradesmen, the average Joes in the marketplace. And now he's talking with the professional thinkers and the professional philosophers. And so his reception we might expect to these audiences was mixed. Some demeaned him as a babbler and others were struggling to grasp his message.

They some kind of foreign preachers preaching about foreign divinities. Because why? Because Paul was talking about Jesus and the resurrection. They made that point. We'll make it again as we go through here. When it's time, when it's time to witness. Witnessing is bearing testimony to Jesus. He was preaching the gospel. So Paul is tenacious and Paul is consistent in this and on that f, b, f, b.

Maya wrote this one purpose consumed the apostle. One thing I do was the thread on which the many beads of his experiences were strong, persecuted and rejected. Today, he said his favorite work tomorrow booted out of everywhere he goes. He continues to preach and teach about Jesus. Now the area up against is a place where speeches were to be made and Paul was brought to the area up against the Council of Aries, the Greek god of war, or as the Latin has it, Mars.

So Kent Hughes writes this. He says, If the speech was given at Mars Hill, you may remember this speech as that at Mars Hill, as many believe than before. Paul Lay the cesium, the wonderful Doric temple on his right was the upper city, the Acropolis, and then the matchless Parthenon around him loomed thousands of statues and altars in gold, silver and bronze. Paul stood amidst the symbols of departed greatness with the gods of Greece staring down at him immediately before him sat the most exclusive philosophical review board in the world. It was here the people asked Paul to share with them this new teaching. Now, it might be a just criticism of most of us that we have a fascination with the new.

I don't know if that fits you or not. A lot of people are easily bored and we like to move on to what is next. A fascination with the news. Certainly the Athenians had this loops not complimentary of them in verse 21, is he now all the Athenians and the foreigners who live there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

They loved hearing something new. And yet, ironically, what Paul is about to share with them is not new at all. His old is really old. I'd like you to think about this just for a second. Paul's message predates their heroes. Paul's message predates their father's philosophy. It is from the beginning. It is from before the beginning of time.

It is not new. It is old, but it is new to them. And as Paul obliges their interest, this is where we learn from his approach. This is where we learn about engaging the culture of verse 22 Men of Athens are perceived in every way a very religious that is a sincere compliment and it wants it establishes a connection between the preacher and his audience.

Paul has found the common ground. What is the common ground between you and the person you want to talk with Jesus about? Paul has found the common ground. What he's about to say is very different from what his hearers believed, but what they share that what we humans have in common with everyone is a desire to know God, The desire to make sense of this life, the desire to worship.

Tony Murrieta puts it this way. In his commentary on eggs, he says, Man is incurably religious. Wherever you go today, in fact, he writes, you'll find some sort of religion. So Paul begins his gospel presentation with that point of connection, the common interest in religion. And he also begins from a position of humbleness. He begins with humility. Humility is so necessary in evangelism, one cannot bear adequate witness to Jesus Christ with an attitude of superiority. Hear me there. No Christian has any right to feel superior better than anyone else in this world. Do you agree with me there? It's about humility is so essential. But Ephesians chapter two is plain. We are saved. By what? By grace, through faith. Not of works that not of yourselves. Why? Lest any man should most Why? Because if we had a say in it, we would be proud. We would be prideful. So God wants us to be reminded. Listen, you've been saved. But your salvation is completely by grace. You've got no reason to be proud or feel better than or superior to somebody else. Everything that you and I have, Beloved, we have received. That doesn't mean we haven't worked hard. That doesn't mean we haven't planned well or anything like that.

Those things go together. But understand this. Everything we have, particularly the spiritual blessings we have in Christ, we have received, we have not earned. They have been given to us, whether it was Luther or SPURGEON or Brendan Manning or any other number of people who've been credited with this saying when it comes to sharing the truth of salvation in Jesus, I've said it before, I'll say it again we are all mere beggars telling other beggars where to find bread.

Paul continues his address for as I pass along and observe the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription to the unknown God. What therefore you worship is unknown. This I proclaim to you. He has made a connection. And now he brings the conversation round. Now, mind you, he has been invited to share this teaching.

One of the criticisms we sometimes receive as believers is that we are trying to impose ourselves. It's interesting, isn't it, that the world has no problem imposing itself. But should we speak up then all of a sudden we're imposing. But I don't want to get off track here and I don't want it to be a rant. I do want to say this Paul's not randomly imposing his views.

He's been invited. He's been brought to this place, and people want to hear what he has to say. The religious Athenians, with their 30,000 idols and multiple altars to their gods, want to make sure that nothing are overlooked. I if one is superstitious when it comes to God or Gods, one would not want to offend, right? That's where they're at.

To cover all the bases. Even there are so given to idolatry that there is an altar and an inscription to an unknown God and the God that's missing from their worship is the God. Paul is going to tell them about. The Athenians may be comfortable with their idolatry, but we do notice here they can see they don't know everything.

And as we share Christ with even hardened individuals who might who might not be persuaded the way that we are, we could we could check in with them and see if they would at least be willing to admit that despite being confident in what they believe, which is different from what we believe, do they know everything? Do they know everything?

The Athenians know there's an unknown unknown God. We don't know. Paul capitalizes on this. So then then the conversation is, Well, if you're willing to admit that you don't know everything, what if this humility is necessary? If you're going to witness, if you're going to share Jesus, if

you're going to preach and teach? But you know what? Humility is also necessary if you're going to listen, if you're going to hear, if you're going to be receptive at all.

So the Athenians recognize an unknown God is unknown to them. But catch this and make sure you know this. He's not unknowable. He is unknown to them, but he's not unknowable. God has in fact, revealed himself, and Paul asserts to them that the God of the Bible is this unknown God. Let's look at what He has to say.

And assuming here that the full content of Paul's speech is not contained in the next few verses, we're going to look at. These are probably just main points or highlights of an outline that he may have used because normally or often a speech in the area up against could take 2 to 3 hours. A Hey man for the half hour sermon, 2 to 3 hour.

Paul says The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of Heaven and earth does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything to Epicureans who believe there is no God in Stoics who saw God in all material things.

Paul declares a contradictory message, As you and I bear witness to God's truth, We must anticipate also it will conflict with what others hold to be true. Keep that in mind when you engage with the culture. You should expect some conflict. You should expect some collision of ideas. We cannot let that stop us from bearing witness to the truth.

We cannot let our fear of man and our fear of conflict stop us from saying what is true. Paul knows what these philosophers believe, and yet he preaches the existence of not many but one God and this one God. And Paul is preaching not from his own opinions, but from the Scripture. This one God is the creator of everything, the world and all that it contains.

And He is a sustainer of life and he is the master of heaven and earth. He is distinct from creation. Yes, but he is intimately involved with it. He cannot be contained in man made temples. And that is always been the case, even with Judaism. And when the Israelites built the temple, there was not an expectation that God was going to be contained in it.

He can't be. He's too great. He dwells where Isaiah says in a high and lofty place he can't be contained in mad man temples. He and he's not needy for men's service. You don't have to worry about about doting on this guy. He doesn't need you. Men will contribute nothing to this God because he has everything. Because he is everything.

Because he's over everything. He is self-sufficient. There was something there who wanted to believe that they were self-sufficient. And Paul was kindly saying, it is God who is self-sufficient. We are not. He doesn't need us. We need him now. Don't be offended by that. Don't let your feelings get hurt by the fact that God doesn't need us. A.W. tells you to put it rightly.

He said God needs no one. But when faith is present, he works through anyone. You hear that? Like, does he need you to make his will done? No, but does he want you? Yes. Yes, he does. Paul is making the argument here without being argumentative, which again is an important part of our witness in this world. Yes, we have to make a case, but we don't have to be argumentative. He answers the question, How do we understand God? And he says, There's one God, creator, sustainer, all powerful. And then he goes back to creation, back to Adam to show his audience how we got here. And what we are here for. Those are questions. Everybody's interested, don't you think? How do we get here? What are we here for?

What is my purpose? Paul's answering these questions. He goes all the way back to creation. Back. Adam, The population of the world, he says, is God's doing the creation of nations. His

handiwork. And he rules over all. And what we would say Paul is doing here is providing the context. He's preaching Jesus all the time. But for people who've never heard of Jesus, they have to learn how he fits into the story of humanity.

And that's something for us to think about as well. Losing the context of Christianity. Some of our conversations are going to have to be like that, providing the context, even if we have to go all the way back to creation. And there's nothing creation for Christ response where you can remember that most of us can remember that this is kind of what Paul is doing when we're sharing the gospel.

We need to bear in mind what the people that we're sharing with may or may not know or believe and where it's helpful. We need to provide the back story, the big picture verse 26, Paul continues, and he made from one man Every nation of mankind, to live on all the face of the earth, having determined a lot of periods and the boundaries of the dwelling place that they should seek, God rest 27 that they should seek God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him.

Listen, this one, true God made us all and He made us to seek Him. The one true God who doesn't need us, wants us to seek Him. He is distinct from us, wholly other. But he's not detached from us. He is in fact knowable. And he wants to be known. If we are honest, we might admit that our problem as humans is not that we can't know God.

It's more often that we don't want to know God. ROMANS Chapter one verses 18 to 23 talks about how we suppress the truth about God in order to worship the created, so we suppress the truth of the Creator in order to worship the creator, which would be our selves or our idols rather than the Creator. So while we are merida's right incurably religious, we also tend to be I don't know if you've noticed this stubbornly independent, so we can come up with a theory that kind of keeps God at a distance, which you can kind of convince myself, Well, who can know God?

Who can know God? Kind of like Paul or Pilar? What is truth? That's not the problem. The problem is it isn't that he can't be known. The problem is that very often we don't want to know him and that Paul says. But he's actually not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being as even some of your own poets have said.

But we are indeed his offspring. The one true God is not far from us because He is a life giving source who sustains us. And beyond that, Paul implies he is our Heavenly Father. When the disciples ask Jesus how to pray. What did He tell them? How do they start? Our Father? This is who God is. God is our Heavenly Father.

And Paul. Paul is interjecting here a notion of God. These people we had no idea about. He's not far off from us. He's close. He's not detached from us. We are his offspring. He is our father. So we are not to think of the divine being is like gold or silver or stone or some deaf, dumb, powerless image.

No one, the life giver. He's not an image formed by the art or the imagination of man, Paul says. Now good preaching. We'll expect some sort of response. And that's where Paul goes next. Verse 30 The times of ignorance God overlook. But now he commands all people everywhere to repent. In other words, you get to the end of a sermon.

At some point, somebody ought to be saying, What do I do with all this? What have I learned? What has been laid out in front of me? What changes required? What action would God have of



me? This is this is what the priest was intended to do to challenge us this way. And so Paul hopes for a response.

And what is the response that he's asking for here? It is that they would repent. Repent a word that means to turn and go in a different direction. And what did they have to repent of? Do you remember? The city was full of idols, so they had to repent of their idolatry. They had to repent of their idolatry.

We just spent all those weeks in Sunday school learning. If we said anything above God, anything above God as the object of a supreme object of our affections, of our time, our happiness or security, then our worship is disordered. We would be worshiping the work of our hands, which is degrading both to God and to ourselves. He deserves better.

We were made for more. And if we're caught in that trap of idolatry, Paul says, the thing to do is to repent. Why should we repent? He tells us why. Verse 31 Because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed because he has fixed the day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed. And of this he's given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. O Paul preaches Jesus, and He preaches the resurrection, the reason he says to turn from your idolatry is because judgment is coming. Judgment is sure. A day is drawing near beloved, where everyone who's ever lived will stand before a holy God and give an account for how they have lived.

On that day, the Scripture tells us there will be two sets of people. You read Matthew 25, literally, you will say there will be two lines those who enter eternal life and those who inherit eternal. Those who enter eternal life will do so because they put their faith in the Son of God who gave his life, who shed his blood on the cross as the payment for their sins, who died in their place, whose payment was accepted by God.

How do we know the payment was accepted? Because while Jesus paid the penalty for sin in his death, he didn't stay dead. The transaction being complete. God raised him to live forever, saying This satisfies my wrath. He raised Jesus and he promises also to raise those who will put their faith in Him to eternal life, to dwell with God forever.

That's those who we will inherit eternal life, those who inherit eternal condemnation will be the ones who stand before God without Jesus as their advocate, the ones who didn't receive Him, who did not receive for themselves the sacrifice of Calvary. Listen, Judgment for sin is coming. Judgment for sin is sure on that day of judgment. Do you want to stand before a holy God with your record or with Jesus record?

This is what Paul's getting in. You can know that your sins are forgiven because Christ is raised from the dead. And you can have that forgiveness and you can have eternal life. Now start talking about judgment. Pretty much the point where people begin to tune out. You see, Curiosity has its limits. And Ken Hughes put it this way.

He said, We can entertain a lot when everything is theoretical, but when it becomes practical, when it becomes personally applicable, He said. This is when men start shifting in their seats and checking their watches. This and we're going to wrap up here, Preacher. Get uncomfortable now. It was a great sermon. I mean, Paul, you imagine it must have been a great sermon.

And for sure it was a gospel presentation. And here again, we find help for our expectations and engaging the culture. Would people flock to the front of the office as the organist played just as I am? I would Paul's message be received? There are three responses briefly, and then we will be done. Some just rejected Paul's message outright.

The truth is sometimes hard to hear and easily dismissed when it doesn't fit what we already believe that the truth is sometimes hard to hear and easily dismissed when it doesn't fit what we already believe. This is why we insist here in this in this fellowship, we be formed by God's Word. We must conform to God's Word. We cannot come here and expect God to yield to us or to make exception for us.

We must be formed by God's Word. Otherwise, we're just dismissing truth, which is what these people did. They rejected the truth. Some people, they just mocked the teaching of the scripture that Paul laid out. The second response, some politely put it all. They didn't outright reject it. But they didn't accept it either. They want to. They want to run down the middle of the road.

You. The problem is running down the middle of the road, right? You get hit by both sides. That's what they want to do in their thinking. They're being fair minded and they say, we'll hear you again on this. And we haven't ruled it out, Paul, but we haven't ruled it in. The Bible would caution us on this response.

Let me ask you, friend, having heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, why would you delay to receive Christ as your savior? What good reason could you possibly have? Some in the crowd thought that they might hear more on the matter. But you know what? There's no evidence here that they ever did. Paul left. He didn't just go out of their midst when he left the area.

I guess if you go to chapter 18, verse one, it says, After this, Paul left and went to Corinth. He's out. Sometimes one delays in responding to the truth about Jesus with all intentions of considering it at another time, at a later time. But you do understand that later time is not guaranteed. You do not know what tomorrow holds.

You do not know if there is a tomorrow for you. The Bible says this today. Today. If you would hear his voice the Scripture says Do not heart in your hearts. Today. Today, let today be the day of salvation. Why would you put it off? Why would you delay? Why would you assume that you're going to have another chance, another hearing?

That's what they did. Some rejected. Some use the delay tactic. But then verse 34, some received Jesus. Some men joined Paul and believed among whom also were diagnosis. The area of guide and woman named Damaris and others with them. Some not not, not a lot, not a ton. Not an overwhelming number. We a couple of names here and some more with them.

But I just want to end with this. If you intend to share the gospel and I hope you do, you might expect similar responses. You might expect that right out of out of hand. Some people will reject what you're saying and they may even mock you for what you believe is true. And others, they will listen to you.

And and yet they may not make a decision and they may even say to you, we can keep talking about this. And a few a few will hear and a few will receive and they will join you. And when they join you, they join us and they join this family, this eternal family of God. And it is for this reason that we know God has chosen some to believe.

And because of that, we can and we must, like the Apostle Paul, continue to share the good news of the salvation that is found in Christ and in Christ alone. Take a few moments, if you might, just to respond quietly. Maybe about your head. Close your eyes, think this through. Let the Holy Spirit do what only the Holy Spirit can do.

What I challenge you is we pause here for a second. Are you out and about?

Are you out and about in the marketplace? Are you going where the people are? I haven't even any Jesus conversations. I have no trouble with other kinds of conversations. Are you having Jesus conversations?

Are you prepared for some conflict as we engage the culture?

There's somebody you know who hasn't ruled it in, but hasn't ruled it out that maybe this week would be a good time to make a phone call or to take someone breakfast and bring this up. Our father and our God, we love you and we praise you. We look at words that were written so, so long ago. And it's amazing how this they just flash forward into our current time and they are just as poignant and just as powerful and just as necessary as they were the day Luke wrote them.

The inspiration of your spirit. Let us take these words to heart. We pray, Father, the God deliver us from the self-protective nature of avoiding conflict or averting our eyes to painful and broken situations, learning to live with things that aren't right help us in the best possible way to be offended by what we? See only because we know when it is wrong.

It's harmful to those people and it demeans you. Give us a passion for your glory and a great love for others that would motivate us to take risks on our own and pay the cost if we must, in order to be faithful. We so thank you for the Apostle Paul and his example and for the great savior that he gave his life to.

And we want to give our lives to as well dismiss us with your blessing. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.