

Paul has begun a missionary outreach in Europe. By divine calling of God through a vision, he has come to Philippi where he began his European mission. He left Philippi under strained circumstances, but leaving a pocket of believers there, that he later wrote one of his epistles to. So leaving Philippi, chapter seventeen says:

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, (Now this sounds like a nice little stroll, but Amphipolis was thirty-three miles from Phillipi. Apollonia was another thirty miles from Amphipolis. And another thirty-seven miles beyond that was another major city known as Thessalonica. It was on the main Roman highway and so Paul liked to come to the cultural centers and the centers of commerce because there were so many people coming and going, it gave opportunity for a more rapid spread of the gospel) *where there was a synagogue of the Jews.* ²*Then Paul, as his custom was,* Now when Paul wrote to the Romans (Romans 1:16) he said I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God to salvation to those who believe, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. So Paul had as a custom, when he would come to a new city, to take the gospel to the Jews first and then from there to the Greeks. So he would always go to the synagogues and there begin his ministry in an area. And so according to his custom, he came to the synagogue of the Jews. It says as his custom was. It was just a routine with Paul. *He went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,* As we were sharing this morning the gospel of Jesus Christ is a very reasonable thing. Salvation is a very reasonable offer that God has made to us. It makes sense to commit your life to God. Paul said (Romans 12:1), I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. It makes sense! God has a much better plan for your life than anything you could devise for yourself. It makes sense to commit your life, to present your bodies unto God as a living sacrifice. Come now, God said (Isaiah 1:18), let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, you can be as white as snow. The gospel is reasonable, in fact I believe that the rejection of the gospel is unreasonable. I think that the only thing that you can attribute the fact that some people reject the gospel is that Satan has so deceived them and blinded their eyes and is holding them captive so that they cannot reason. And it is interesting how unreasonable is the stance that people take who reject the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I say that because when you look at these people and then you see the things they do believe, you really know that there is something wrong. They are not using the full capacities of their mental faculties. The stuff that they believe, once rejecting the truth. As Paul writing to the Thessalonians later, he talked about how that because they did not have the love of the truth in their hearts, they became deluded. They believed the lie rather than the truth. And that is the case for those who reject the truth. So reasoned out of the Scriptures. The Scriptures of course would be the Old Testament. And he opened that is expounded. This word is used once more in the New Testament. It is used again by Luke in his gospel, where Jesus was on the road on the road to Emmaus with His two disciples and he opened to them the Scriptures. Same word, Paul opening and expounding or ³*explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ."* So he showed them from their Scriptures how that in their Scriptures it was declared that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead. He no doubt shared with them, Isaiah 53, shared with them, Psalm 22, shared with them Psalm 16, where the promise of the Father was, You will not leave My soul in hell neither will You allow the Holy One to see corruption. And Peter testified God did not leave His soul in hell. So opening and alleging that the Messiah must need have suffered and risen again. Now, they knew the prophecies concerning the suffering of the Messiah. They also new though the prophecies of the Messiah establishing the Kingdom of God upon the earth. And they could not reconcile the prophecies that dealt with the reign of the Messiah, the glorious eternal reign, they could not reconcile that in their minds with the prophecies of the

Messiah's suffering and rising from the dead. So many of the Rabbis taught that there would be two messiahs, one the suffering the Messiah and the other the reigning Messiah. Some think that when John the Baptist sent messengers to Jesus when he was in prison and John asked are You the one we are looking for? Or shall we look for someone else? That John was referring to the theory of the two messiahs. Are You the One that is going to suffer or are You the One who is going to establish the Kingdom. Shall we look for another one to establish the Kingdom. It is true that it is difficult to reconcile the prophecies because of the vast divergence between the suffering and the glorious reign. But it is easily answered in the two comings of the One Messiah. Not two messiahs. The two comings of the one Messiah. When Prime Minister Begin was still alive I had the opportunity of sitting with him and talking with him. I found him a very charming person, very committed to the Bible. I said to him, you know, there really isn't that much difference in our beliefs. For you believe in the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and that's the very God that I believe in. The One who created the heavens and the earth and everything that is in them. And you believe that the Messiah is coming soon. I believe that the Messiah is coming soon. So the basic difference is that when the Messiah comes you will say, that's the Messiah, and I will say that's the Messiah. But I'll say this is the second time He's been here.

Paul reasoned with them out of the Scriptures showing that the Messiah had to suffer and to rise from the dead. That this Jesus whom I'm sharing with you is the Messiah.

⁴*And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.* Many people believed as Paul showed them out of the Scriptures concerning the Messiah.

⁵*But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men (lewd fellows, in the Greek it reads from the street. They are the gang type. The kind that hang out on the street corners. They were of the baser sort.) from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.* ⁶*But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.* I love the accusation. Only it's not right. They weren't turning the world upside down. They were turning the world right side up. The world is upside down. It needs turning right side up. And so these men who are turning the world right side up have come here too. However that was not the accusation. ⁷*Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king--Jesus."* Now as we said earlier in our studies of Acts, there was the defying of the Roman emperor and loyal citizens to Rome were required to say, Caesar is lord. Or the government rules. The government is lord over our lives. Now Christians would refuse to say the Caesar is lord. They would say that Jesus is Lord! And this was the thing that was the testing in those days of a Christian. Thousand and hundreds of thousands of them were executed by the Roman government because they were looked upon as insurrectionists against Rome for their refusal to say that Caesar is lord. And when they were brought for execution, whether it be to be stretched on the rack, burned at the stake, or crucified, they would be given an opportunity to recant. If when they were standing there ready to be placed on the cross, the executioner would say, say Caesar is lord. And they could get out of the execution by just saying that Caesar is lord. The charge is dismissed. But hundreds of thousands of them refused to acknowledge the lordship of Caesar and went to the crosses, burned at the stake, were stretched on the racks, were beheaded. And Foxe's Book of Martyrs is a must read to find the courage and the commitment of the early church. When you read that you will say, man, I wonder if I am even a Christian? The commitment and the courage that these people had. And so this was the accusation, the one's that are turning the world upside down have come here and they are teaching us something that is contrary for us as Roman citizens. That there is another king, one Jesus.

⁸*And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things.* It was troubling. ⁹*So when they had taken security from Jason (that is he had to post bail) and the rest, they let them go.* So they posted bail to insure that they would come for trial. Now we have here a very brief account of Paul's ministry in Thessalonica, but in that brief time that he was there, there was a strong church established.

Let's turn to I Thessalonians and notice Paul's letter to the church that was established here in Acts seventeen. He wrote back to them when he had arrived in Corinth. It was really not long after he had left. And so he writes ¹ *Thes. 1:1-7*

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

²*We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, ³remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, ⁴knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. ⁵For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. ⁶And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. The church in Thessalonica, though Paul was only there a short time, was firmly established. It is thought that maybe Luke remained there to minister there for awhile, but the reputation of the church began to spread abroad throughout Macedonia and Achaia. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. ⁹For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. ²But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. ³For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. ⁴But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. ⁵For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness--God is witness.*

And so he gives this little personal note to the Thessalonians. It would be beneficial to you, as just extracurricular to read Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians in conjunction with the seventeenth chapter here. It will help you to grasp and understand what was accomplished in this very short ministry there. You say, oh, both epistles? Well next week Paul goes to Corinth and, well, his letters to the Corinthians were quite a bit longer. These are short little letters. Short chapters and just a few chapters, but if you want extra special credit then read the Corinthian epistles this week along with your reading of Acts and it gives you great background for understanding Paul's ministry in these places.

¹⁰*Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea.* Now Thessalonica was main highway. It was the center of a lot of traffic. Berea was a little hick town off the beaten track. And so it was a sort of a no reputation kind of a city. There was an interesting letter from the emperor Kickarua to a fellow by the name of Thilo, who was an extremely poor administrator and in his letter he rebukes this fellow. He tells him what a mess he made and left after he tried to govern there in Thessalonica and he sort of fled to Berea, you know, but even there he was a mess. It was quite a letter but it is interesting that he makes mention of Berea as you know, the off beat place.

So they came to Berea. *When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.* Paul no doubt was preaching the same message that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead. So they went home and searched the Scriptures that Paul was teaching them from. They studied them to see if Paul was speaking the truth.

¹²*Therefore many of them believed,* (The diligent search brought to them the confirmation of the truth of Paul's preaching. I like what Chuck Missler says. Don't believe anything Chuck Missler says, but be a Berean. Go and search the Scriptures. I think Chuck Missler says a lot of things that he doesn't believe, just

to get you to search the Scriptures. I think his intent is, you know, just to have you search diligently, just to find out. Is this Scriptural? He is very inspiring and very challenging as you know. So because they searched the Scriptures diligently, many of them believed.) *and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.* ¹³*But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds.* ¹⁴*Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there.* While Paul was hustled out. It is interesting Paul was called of the Lord to go to Europe. He starts out in Philippi. He's thrown in jail, beaten and thrown in jail. He goes to Thessalonica and they have to sort of secret him out at night because of the trouble that arose. Now he is in Berea and again, you know, creates some problems and has to leave Berea. It's like the little kid said, the New Testament ends with revolutions. It seems like it's filled with revolutions. Every he preached there was a revolution. But that is so true. Isn't the gospel bringing revolution to people's lives? I mean what a change, what a dramatic changes come when a person receives the gospel received the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is a revolution that goes on in your own life.

¹⁵*So 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.* Paul sent back a command for them to Silas and Timothy to get down here in a hurry! So they went back with Paul's message to Silas and Timothy to meet him there in Athens.

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.* Athens was the city of idols. It is said that they had more idols than people in Athens. They had of course, were Pantheistic, and so they had deified practically everything! They had the gods of war, the gods of peace, the gods of anger, the gods of love, the gods of hate. They had gods for everything. Every emotion that a person that a person feels. They had a god for that emotion. Now it is said that there was a great plague in Athens. So they released in Athens, herds of sheep and where ever a sheep would stop, the idol of the god that was nearest to that. They would sacrifice that sheep to that god. They were trying to appease the gods to remove that plague. And if there were no idol near the place where the sheep stopped, then they would sacrifice that sheep to the unknown god. In case there is one out there we've missed, we don't want you to be offended. And so they had idols for, well Paul said the city was wholly given over to idolatry. Even to the present time, the great temples, the great ruins of the temple of Jupiter and all that are there are marvels to behold. The Parathion and the whole Areopagus are just a marvel to behold. So Paul saw this and he was stirred. He saw that people were searching for God but they were blind to the truth of God, the true and living God. And yet there was a void that they were trying to fill and they were worshipping multitudes of different gods.

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 babblers 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.* Now there used to be up in Los Angeles a place called Pershing Square, downtown LA. That was sort of a Mars Hill in LA. They would gather there and would start expounding some belief and crowds would gather all over Pershing Square and people would be arguing. Some guy would be giving out his philosophy and other people would be questioning, tearing it down, contradicting. We used to go down there just for amusement. To listen to all of the discussions that were going on and to the various concepts and various philosophical ideas that were being expressed.

Now the Epicureans were an interesting philosophy. First of all they believed that everything happened by chance. No design. They believed that death ended it all. It's all over when you die. They believed that there were gods, but that the gods were remote from this world and really didn't care about the world at all.

Thus, they believed that pleasure was the chief end of man. And so they measured every experience by the amount of pleasure that it brought. They actually didn't mean fleshly and worldly or material pleasure for the highest pleasure was the pleasure that brought no pain afterwards for so much of the pleasures of the world leave pain afterward. So they were looking for pure pleasure that leaves only a pleasurable feeling afterwards.

Now the Stoics, they that believed that everything was god. That god was a fiery spirit. That the spirit grew blunt and dull in matter. But it was in everything. And what gave man life was that little spark of spirit and it gave life to everything. They believed that everything was fated. That you couldn't change what was to be. Everything was fated because everything was of god. God was in everything. And thus, whatever happened you're not to care. You couldn't stop it. You couldn't help it. It's going to happen. So they were stoic. They believed that it was god's will. You had to accept it. There was nothing you could do about it. And they believed that the world went through cycles of development and then disintegration and then starting all over again. Much like the big bang theory that we are in an expanding universe, but one day the whole thing will hit its apex and then gravity will draw it back in again and it will all be brought back again into a small tight little mass and then there will be another explosion and it will go through another fifteen billion years with evolution developing again. So the stoics. That is sort of the stoic philosophy that there was the disintegration of everything and then it all starts over and you have many, many cycles. So these were the people that were curious. The Athenians had nothing to do but just stand around bring new concepts and ideas.

²²Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus (Up there on Mars Hill, the Areopagus where you have a great view of the agora, the marketplace down below of Athens, with the large temples on either end of the marketplace. Just above you the Parthenon and the temple of Athena and all. And so in the midst of all of these idols, statues, looking down and seeing the city with the many altars.) and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; (Superstitious in the old King James. That is a poor translation. Paul is smarter than just insult people. What Paul said is that I perceive that you are very religious. You are extremely religious.) ²³for 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: ²⁴God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Now some of the most marvelous temples that were built by man were right there. Paul was surrounded with them and he was saying, the true God, the living God. The One who created the universe doesn't dwell in temples made by hands.

²⁵Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, The true God is not made with man's hands. The true God is the maker of man. Now throughout the history of mankind, man has made idols to represent his god and then he worshipped those idols. And in a sense the people who lived in times gone by, in Bible days, were more honest and open than we are today. Today man is deceived much more because man worships the same god but he doesn't make the idols any more and thus he doesn't realize that he is worshipping that god. They at least acknowledged that this is the master passion of my life. I worship sex. Now they were honest about it. They had the goddess Aphrodite. They had their goddess of sex, Aphrodite. They acknowledged this is the god I worship. There was an honesty there. Now people are worshipping sex today but there is a dishonesty. There is a denial of it because you don't have an idol. Today there is a dishonesty. Guys will sit at their computers now and oh, what an evil age! That this stuff is available on Internet and all. And people will sit there and they'll watch! And now the acts I saw on TV the other night. Some documentary on stuff that can be gotten on the Internet and people get into it. And it captivates them. They get hooked on it. They get addicted to it. It becomes their god! They can't wait to go in and to dial in and to get in on the junk that is there and get aroused and all through the pornography that is available. It's just one step further a little bit beyond the X videos, but people are into it. But yet they deny that they worship it. But night after night, they can't wait to bring it onto the screen. There is a dishonesty there.

You are not really honest with yourself because you didn't make an idol. Now the ancient people they were more honest. They were more open. Yes, this is what I'm in to. This is what I worship. This is the god of my life. And there was at least an honesty there. So Paul is saying, though, that God isn't worshipped by man's hands. Man creates his own god and he worships the god that he has made with his hands. But he said that the true God isn't made with man's hands. The true God is the maker. The true God you worship ignorantly, the unknown God, I'd like to tell you about Him. The God that made the world and all things therein. Seeing that He is the Lord of heaven and of earth. He doesn't dwell in these temples that are made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands *as though He needed anything*, (You can't give anything to God. He doesn't need anything from you but you need an awful lot from Him!) *since He gives to all life, breath, and all things*. You depend upon God for life. He isn't dependent on you.

²⁶*And He has made from one blood every nation of men* (Now the wonderful thing is that in Christ there are no barriers of national identity or ethnic groups. God has made of one blood all men. And though we may have different pigmentation in our skin, we are all one. And the beautiful thing about Jesus Christ as He breaks down the walls that divided men into ethnic groups. There is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free but Christ is all and in all. I'm not really, you know, a white, Anglo-Saxon, Caucasian or whatever. I'm a Christian! I have a whole new identity. I am a Christian. And I, you know, am not of English and French and all that. I'm a Christian! If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. The old things are passed away, everything has become new! And I have a whole new nationality. I'm a Christian! I relate to Him! And those who believe in Him are my brothers and sisters in Christ! I think that it is a tragedy that even yet in some of the churches there is a type of segregation that does exist. Paul said God has made from one blood all men.)

to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, God has set the limits for you. The time that you are going to exist has been determined by God already. He has made an appointment with me. It's appointed unto man once to die. Now God knows exactly when I am going to keep that appointment. How I am going to keep it, under which circumstances that I'm going to keep it. He hasn't let me know yet. But one day my appointment is going to come. And I can't say, oh, wait a minute, I want to take care of this first. No, when it comes it comes, with all of us! God has appointed the boundaries of our habitation.

²⁷*so that they* (and here is the purpose of God) *should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us*; (God put within man that yearning for God. Man tries to substitute many things to fulfill that emptiness that he has. Only God can meet the real thirst in your life. Jesus said if you thirst come to Me and drink. Not only will you be satisfied. Your life will become like an overflowing cup. Out of your innermost being there will flow rivers of living water. So that they should seek the Lord in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him though He really isn't that far from you)

²⁸*for in Him* (Paul said) *we live and move and have our being*, I am surrounded by God! David said (Psalm 139:7-10), whether can I flee from Thy presence. If I ascend into heaven You are there. If I descend into hell, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning and I flee to the uttermost parts of the sea, even there You encompass me. In Him we live and move and have our being! I think that this is one truth that we all need to become very cognizant of. God is with me at all times and in all places! I never leave His presence. I cannot escape His presence. That was the mistake that Jonah made. He sought to flee from the presence of God. You can't do it! It's impossible! And we need to be conscience of the presence of God. That's the problem! God is there. I'm not always conscience of His presence. And thus sometimes I do things, that if I were really conscience of His presence I wouldn't do them. You know it said concerning Moses that he looked this way, he looked that way. He saw no man so he killed the Egyptian. He should have looked up! And so many times we lose that consciousness of God, that if could only maintain that in Him we live, we move, we have our being. I cannot escape Him. Then we would be a lot more careful about how we responded. How we reacted. What we said. What we did. I wouldn't have to preach holiness. If you only had the continual consciousness of the presence of God because that in itself would be the stimulus for true holiness.

Paul then quotes certain of their poets, *as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'* ²⁹ *Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, (The poet was right!) we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.* You ought not to think that God is like these forms that they have made out of silver and gold and stone. They are the work of man's hands. Paul affirms that we are the offspring of God. The Bible tells us that in the beginning when God created man. God said let Us make man in Our image and after Our likenesses. So God created man. Formed his body out of the dust of the earth. Breathed into him the breath of life. Man became a living spirit. So that I was created in the image of God, in the likeness of God. But we read that man fell from that image, by sin. So that looking around today, you cannot see God's intent in creation for man except that in that man who had committed his life fully to God in fellowship and service, you begin to see God's intent. But man is not a highly evolved animal. He is a fallen form of God. He was created in the image of God, in the likeness of God. And from that he had fallen from God. So the missing link is not between us and the animal kingdom! The missing link is between man and God! And God sent His Son to be that missing link! It is through Jesus that I can again be linked again to God! It is through Jesus that I become conformed into the image from which man fell because of sin. Into the image of God and the purpose of God is to bring us back as sons of God into communion and into fellowship with Him! To restore for you that which man lost when he fell from the image of God. And to this end Jesus came!

When Job was going through all of his misery. Friend that came to comfort him. One of them said, Job, just get right with God and things will be okay. Job said, I look at the heavens that He created and I realize how vast He is! And I realize that I'm nothing! I'm down here on this little planet. I'm nothing! Who am I to plead my case before God? And he said, there is no daysman between us that can lay his hand on us both. Job saw the dilemma. The gap between the infinite God and finite man was so great that there was no way that finite man could reach the infinite God! And that is the weakness and the failure of every religious system that begins with an earth base! Finite man tried to reach out and touch the infinite God. Impossible! And thus every religious system is doomed for failure. Christianity is the opposite of a religion. For it isn't reaching out to God, but it is a infinite God reaching down to touch the finite man! Now again you are talking about reason, talking about considering things, that's reasonable. I can see how that an infinite God could easily touch the finite man, but I can also see the impossibility of a finite man touching the infinite God, thus the reasons for the failure of religions. But where Christianity brings us together. Job said, I need someone that can lay His hand on us both. In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God and all things were made by Him. And without Him was not anything made that was made. And in Him was life. And that life was the life was the light of men.

And now the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John said that which was from the beginning, which we have seen, which we have heard, which we have touched. For the Word was made flesh. So I need someone, Job said, that can touch God and can touch me. Someone that can be the link between the two and the cry of Job is answered in Jesus Christ! In the form of God not thought it robbery to be equal with God, yet He can in the likeness of man. He can touch me! At the same time He can touch the Father! He is the missing link! And He brings us back to the fullness, to the satisfaction. Are you looking for roots? Don't look at an ape! When Moses, where he failed. Look up! You'll find the missing link. It's between you and God! God didn't make you an animal. God made you in His likeness. And when you again come into the likeness of God then your life will be rich and fulfilled. David said, I will be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness. Beloved now are we the sons of God, it doesn't yet appear what we are going to be, but when He appears we are going to be like Him! Restored you see, in the image of the creator!

So God isn't represented by these images of silver, gold and stone, something shaped by man's devising. And of course you look today at the statuary and all of Greece and it's marvelously. You marvel at the ability to form these images and these licenses. It actually brings you into an awe of man's capacities. They really don't bring you a consciousness of God, but you think, wow, that artist was really outstanding. That's why I like the simple structure of the sanctuary here, just wood. We aren't drawn to man's artistic capacities

or ornateness. Because we are not here to be drawn to man but we are here to be drawn to the living God, who created all things.

Now Paul said, ³⁰*Truly, these times of ignorance* (That is man's ignorance of God.) *God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,* (Now that Jesus has come. The gospel to be preached to all the world. It begins with man repenting. Turning from his rebelling against God. Turning from his sinful practices to be filled with the Spirit of God and to be restored into the image of God by the Holy Spirit working us. We all with open faces beholding the glory of the Lord are being changed from glory to glory into that same image by His Spirit working in us.) ³¹*because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness* (Now note that. He'll judge the world in righteousness. What about those people living in Africa that have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ? They live and they die and they have never heard the gospel. What about those people? He's going to judge the world in righteousness. But what is God going to do? I don't know. But when He does. I'm going to say, righteous, Lord! That's so perfect! That's so righteous because He's is going to judge the world in righteousness.) *by the Man* (that is Jesus) *whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."* ³²*And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked,* (They said, oh, come on!) *while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter."* ³³*So Paul departed from among them.* ³⁴*However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite,* (The Areopagite was a special group, a select group of men. They were considered really sort of intellectual giants of the day. And Dionysius was one of those.) *a woman named Damaris, and others with them.* Now note the varied reactions to the gospel that Paul preached. Some mocked. Some procrastinated. They said well, we would like to hear more about this sometime. While others believed. It's like Jesus said when the seed sown. Some falls on the wayside, some among thorns, some among stony ground and some on good soil. It's always that way. The reactions of people to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The important thing that you need to note is what is your reaction? Are you among those that sort of mock? Or are you among those who are sort of putting off the decision? Well, maybe some day. Or are you of those who have believed and committed yourself to faith in Jesus Christ? It's important you know, because one day God is going to judge the world in righteousness through Jesus Christ.

Father, we thank You again for Your word. We thank You Lord for the ministry of Paul the apostle, that stands to us as an inspiration to getting out and sharing Your truth with others and not really being concerned about the persecution that often follows the proclaiming of the gospel. That Lord, we will be bold in our witness for You. Knowing, Lord, that You alone are able to save men from sin and to give to them eternal life. That without You they are hopelessly lost. So Lord, may we be the bearers of good news to a lost world in which we live. That our lives, Lord, may be a witness of You as You by Your Spirit change us and transform us into Your image. Lord, let the light of love of the gospel shine forth in this darkened world through our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.