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Act 17 verses 16 through 34. These are God's words. 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. 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, Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him.

And some said, what does this babbling man want to say? Others said, he seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods. Because he preached to them. Jesus, and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to the Areopagus saying, I mean, we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak.

For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore, we want to know what these things mean. For all the Athenians and the foreigners who are there spent their time in nothing else. But either to tell or to hear some new thing. Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said to the men of Athens. I perceived that in all things, you are very religious.

Because I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship. I've even found an altar with this inscription to the unknown God. Therefore, The one whom you worship without knowing. Him. I proclaim to you. God. Who made the world. And everything in it. Since he is Lord. Of heaven.

And earth. Does not dwell in temples, made with hands. Nor? Is he worshiped with men's hands? As though he needed anything. Since he gives to all life. And breath. And all things. And he has made from one blood every nation of men. To dwell on all the face of the earth.

And has determined their pre-appointed times. And the boundaries of their dwellings. So that they should seek the Lord. In the hopes that they might group for him. And find him. There is not far from each one of us. For in him, we live And move. And have our being.

Was also some of your own poets have said. For we are also his offspring. Therefore, Since we are the offspring of God. We are not to think that the divine nature is like gold or Silver, or Stone. Something shaped by man and man's devising. Truly these times of ignorance.

God, overlooked. But now, commands all men everywhere to repent, Because he is appointed a day. In which he will judge the world in righteousness. But the man, whom he is ordained. He has given assurance of this to all. By raising him from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, Some mocked.

While others said we will hear you again on this matter. So Paul departed from among them. However, some men joined him and believed. Among them Dionysius the Areopagite. A woman named Damaris. And others. With them. So, for the reading of God's inspired and inherent word, We rejoice to know that he adds his blessing to it.

Please be seated.

It's interesting. When He leaves Berea. It seems that Paul is Not intending to evangelize verse 16 has him in waiting mode. Now, while Paul waited for them, at Athens, It doesn't describe him as reasoning or preaching the word at Athens. It actually talks about something that Triggered him. To, to begin.

To. To. Minister or to evangelize it Athens. Now, while Paul waited for them, at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him. Uh, when he saw that the city, Was given over to idols. And so, he's in waiting mode and the, the Lord triggers him there. And then when he leaves, Athens and Macedonia to go into the region of Ionia and the city of Corinth.

It tells us in verse 5 that it was with Silas and Timothy's a rival from Macedonia that compels Paul by the spirit to begin, testifying to begin bearing solemn witness. To the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. And so there's this sense that while he is waiting for Silas and Timothy that Paul wasn't really intending on evangelizing, he wasn't really intending on Uh, church planting or mission work.

Which the church planting and mission work that he had been doing. With his ministry companions with his partners. But in the passage that is before us between verse 16 and the end of the chapter, the apostle actually ends up in an incident that many hold out as a classic example or even the ultimate example of evangelism and apologetics and witnessing for Christ.

So how do we get from? Paul intending, just to wait around for Silas and Timothy to Paul. Witnessing evangelizing preaching doing missions in such a way that some And whether this is the The ultimate example or intended to be the way that many. Many use it or not. Uh that there is this proclamation of the gospel that we will be examining, but how do we get from one to the other?

And the answer is. The risen Lord, Jesus Christ. You can see this in Paul talks about Yeah, as he As he starts in the. Uh, the synagogue there. And then he, you know, when synagogue lets out, he goes to the marketplace and The reason that they think that that they end up calling him a A babbling.

A word. Sower. So w, e r. Literally is. Is a word. There's a marginal reading. In the NIV James, it says seed picker, but it's really just the word for seed and the word for word. And the idea is. At least to the Greeks and the marketplace. He sounds like a guy who's just throwing words at everything to, to see what will stick babbler, not a bad translation's better than your marginal reading there?

The reason he ends up Uh, being called a babbling or by some who are being a little bit more charitable. A proclaimer of foreign gods is because he's preaching Jesus. And the resurrection. And so they drag them off to the Areopagus and intended to go to the area but guess, maybe you need an invitation.

The dragon off there, and What do we hear him preach there? Well, we hear him preach. Jesus. As the one way of knowing the God who made the world and everything in it, in whom we live and move and have our being And the resurrection. And so, it's Jesus and the resurrection and the The view of people around him who do not know God, because they do not know the resurrected Christ.

That's how we get. From verse 16 and waiting mode. To. Telling about Jesus and the resurrection to anybody who will hear To. Getting dragged to the place where they would have these Um, Interfaith moments that he denounces when he gets dragged there, And preaching the gospel there and then he ends up getting laughed off the stage as it were.

And a couple of people joined him. And he, Goes off. To Corinth. It's not quite the way many of us, probably remember this passage because of the way that it has been held up and used. Uh, by many more, we'll get there. So what we get is that god has made himself known in the risen jesus.

And that's what provokes, the apostle in the first place. So the first thing we'll see is that paul is provoked by the risen jesus. And then we see him at synagogue and in the marketplace. Persuading people and evangelizing. About the risk in jesus. And then he's brought to the ariopagus where they do this.

Yeah, interfaith thing that is Not just their leisure time but and we'll hear about this, you know, they spend all their time. Uh, on that. Not the first society. To get sucked into social media. Ours is just electronic. They spent all their time. In telling or hearing. Uh, something new, at least in this place, but there he proclaimed.

The risen jesus and as he did, so, He made a promise. That every one of them. Everyone of you. Will encounter. The risen jesus. And so, he promised The reason jesus in the first place. It's provoked. By and for the risen jesus. Over 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 in waiting mode, but he couldn't stay that way. Why? Because of something that had happened to him on the road to Damascus. He had discovered or rather, He found himself being discovered by on the road to Damascus.

The risen lord, jesus christ. He had discovered that the one who rules heaven and earth, The one who dwells in an approachable light so that if he appears to you at noonday, The sun is out shown and you are blinded and arrested and knocked to the ground. That the living god.

Who had appeared to Moses at the bush. Was jesus of nazareth? Who not too long before that? Had been crucified outside jerusalem? Because he encountered the living, god. And he hears him say saw saw. Why are you persecuting me? And the lord jesus says to him, i am Jesus.

And so paul, ever since then has seen everything. He's seen everything in its connection. To the living god who has made himself known in the lord, jesus christ, the living god, whom paul with all of his old testament, knowledge. And as far as the words and the phrases and, and the exegesis Apart from knowing that christ is the key to all of it.

He knew it better than any of you. He knows knew it far better than i But he did not know jehovah. He did not know yahweh. Who was the subject? Of that entire old testament scripture. He met him. On the road to Damascus. And now, here he is in Athens.

And he's going through Athens and what does he see? He sees people who don't know god because they don't know christ. And it's not just the ones who are the idolaters. It's the churchgoers. That's the first place he goes. He goes first to the synagogue. Where are the jews?

The monotheists. He doesn't go to the pluralists. He goes where there are the the jews and the monotheistic gentiles who have come to the conclusion that the god of the jews is the one true god. But the jews don't know. God. Why. Because they don't know the risen jesus.

And even those monotheistic gentiles they don't know. God, why? Because they don't know the risk in Jesus. He knows what Jesus said to the Jews who didn't acknowledge him before he died and rose again. That if they don't know him and they don't worship him, they don't know or worship.

The Father. They don't know where to worship the triune God. If you're not a Trinitarian now, if you don't believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ as God, the Son became flesh. To live in the place of and die for and rise again. To live in our place of sinners and die for them.

And rise again, on a count of their justification. You don't know God. This is the only God that there is. He's the Lord of heaven and earth or there are not a bunch of different gods for a bunch of different nations on earth. And there are not a bunch of different gods duking it out in heaven.

One God. Lord of heaven and earth. One way of knowing it. The risen Lord, Jesus Christ. You and I know that don't we? I hope. If you don't know that, you don't know God. But for those of us who do, how is it that we can live? Among so many, who don't know that.

And, we provoked. Our spirits. It's very convicting. For the preacher this week. In the middle of studying, this passage and he was out on the Wednesday morning. And he had a number of errands to run. And, God took. The. Cultural holiday week. And, a threat. Of some nasty weather.

With the sensationalism of the instant media age. Is not enough to call. You know, call weather fronts by names. You know, Elliott doesn't sound that intimidating. However, so they add now. Bomb cyclone. Maybe they didn't have that in the American media, I don't really pay attention to American media.

I get it filtered through. Yeah, sky news and Britain or Australia, not that that's you know, unbiased but a little bit better. And they must have picked it up from somewhere, bomb cyclone. Anyway, in the south, everything's a bomb cyclone. The bread and the milk disappears and meat, they were so many people.

And the pool closes at 11. And, even as fast as the oldie people, it was so bad. There were four four checkouts four checkouts open it all day at one time. And, and I was just annoyed the whole time. And then I got to Kroger for the pickup.

It's it's a wonderful thing where you've got an appointment time and you just supposed to pull in and they're supposed to track you on your phone. And I know some of you that's anathema. What the? Yeah, all of them. Serve me under God and his good providence if it can arrive at the spot the time that I arrive at the spot, that's more.

Time to study the word and pastor God's people. Um, but that didn't happen on Wednesday. That asks, I have my car and a line of cars to get to a spot and then set in a spot for an hour. Oh, I was provoked in my spirit.

But it was not because people didn't know, there was more Jesus. And then I got home. And I hope in the Bible. And start to study again.

Do we know there isn't Lord, Jesus. Do we see everything so much? Through the filter of the God who made us becoming a man. To render the obedience that we are under obligation to render. And then after he had done, so to receive the penalty that we deserve. And then rising again from the dead because the living God from all eternity wanted to make for himself.

A people who know him And who love him. And who turned from everything else to him and to live for him.

Because i suspect that if we're not provoked by the fact, That other people don't know him that way. That he isn't being enjoyed that glorious in himself and that they themselves are perishing apart from the knowledge of him. If we're not provoked by that for them, Then how much?

Have we really come to embrace and know? The risen lord, jesus ourselves.

The city was. According to idols. New King, James has given over to idols. The the word he actually makes up a word here, the whole phrase was given over to idols as one word in which he he takes a preposition for according to and he takes a preposition for the the known for idols.

He just mashed them together. It was you know the the the sign as you pass in into the city, as i will welcome to Athens population. Whatever. But as far as, What paul could see it was idletown. Why? Because the earth belonged to the risen lord, jesus and everything in it and the people belong to the risen lord.

Jesus. And if they don't know him, Then, it's idletown. Doesn't matter what they think it is. Because he sees it rightly, In light. Of the lord jesus christ. Him, we see. By faith. This is You see their first peter one verse a tomb. You not having seen you love and the blessing of loving him whom we have not laid.

Uh yeah. Sight of our eyes upon But the reason we love him, second Corinthians 4:6 is because god gives the light of the knowledge of his glory to shine and believer's hearts in the face of jesus christ. Second Corinthians, 4 6. So, he was provoked. By the risen. Jesus.

And this is why he immediately starts persuading people. He sees that the city has given over to idols, he doesn't go to the areaopagus. He doesn't even go first to the marketplace. Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the jews and the Gentile worshipers. Why? Because they have more knowledge.

They have the scriptures, the the jews even have the, the covenants and the fathers, but the advantage of the jew was this chief, among all he has the oracles of god. And from them was to come the christ according to the flesh. And so he goes to those to whom the risen lord.

Jesus most belongs even as jesus himself came as john one says to those who are out his own. Who received him not and he had that mindset. You remember, even though he did minister to Gentiles, he focused so much. On israel. That, that when You know, when uh, one point they wanted him to To minister to.

A gentile and he says, i was sent only to the lost sheep of israel. And he lived his his ministry. And especially towards the end with his face set toward jerusalem. And so paul as he's provoked, by the lack of the knowledge of god, because there's the lack of the knowledge of the risen.

Lord. Jesus. He first goes to the to the synagogue. If the synagogue is open, he's going to be there. And, These reasoning with them. The the word is the one from which we we get dialoging, you know, keep that in mind for next week. When we get to verse 4 of chapter 18 Or maybe in two weeks time probably in two weeks time.

And if the synagogues open, he's there, and he's reasoning with them about Jesus and the resurrection and the synagogue lets out. And what does he do? Oh, he doesn't go back to where he's staying. He goes to the marketplace. And whom does he tell about Jesus in the resurrection?

The answer is whomever he can find. This isn't, um, You know, this isn't the trying to engage the people who, you know, I hope you have not had to. To gag on the The ministry jargon of the last 20 years so much as I had, but the cultural gatekeepers.

You know this idea among reformed preaching and pastoring and evangelism that yeah you really you really should aim you know for the key people so that He was aiming at the cultural. Gatekeepers read the text. With the Jews and the gentile worshipers and then in the marketplace daily with those who happen to be there, That that was that was the the qualification for someone that that made them a target for evangelism.

They're human and their present.

In fact, he runs into certain Epicurean and stoic philosophers and we don't have Time for, for all of that right now. Because Epicurean doesn't mean what Americans have come to use it to mean and stoic, doesn't mean what Americans have come to use it. To me. It doesn't just mean like those who are self-indulgent on the one side and those who did everything by willpower and the other side.

Now, these are highly sophisticated highly trained philosophers. You know, we think western philosophy has come so far You know, everything from Descartes to now the Greeks had done three times. Uh, these are very complex highly. Complex philosophical systems with highly trained highly educated men. The the place in the text the the significance, and the text of the certain Epicurean and stoic philosophers, who encountered him is the contrast to the word babbling in the other part of the verse.

How silly and ridiculous Paul sounded by comparison preaching, the risen Lord, Jesus Christ. To these highly sophisticated men. He was not like PCA preachers at big churches in New York with lots of books rubbing elbows with the intellectually elite So that they can be impressed with how well he knows them.

Now, he was A babbling. And a fool for Jesus's sake. Because the gospel is foolishness to Greeks. It wasn't a rhetorical flourish of the penny. To the Corinthians. That was the experience of a man obsessed with the risen Lord. Jesus Christ because the risen Jesus is how God has made himself known to us.

To those who weren't, yeah. Sophisticated enough like the Epicureans and the Stoics You know, they didn't call him the babbling but these others said he seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods. Because he preached to them. Jesus. And the resurrection and That was the. That was the point at which they Drag him off now.

They took him and brought him to the Ariopagus. This happens to street preachers. Right. That's what he was doing in the marketplace. Basically street preaching. Anybody who could come by, anybody who passed by was a target for evangelism? And it still happens in our culture today. Um, We haven't tried it yet, actually.

No, no. How you go about getting The permissions for that. The tone that I was in before the The red tape was extreme. Um, I'm trying to get here. But ordinarily from Experience in different places and from other brothers experience, They tried to get you to do it anywhere else.

Yeah, now we're even more sophisticated. You should have the podcast, you should do TED talks. Why don't you give a talk on campus? The dragon to the ariophagus, it wasn't paul's idea. To go to the ariopagus. Yep, they take him there. And what are they doing there? Paul stood in the midst of the areaopagus.

Sorry. Uh, they take them to the ariopicus saying may, we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak for. You are bringing some strange things to our ears. And they weren't put off by this strangeness. They like the strangeness. They were pluralists. This isn't the first pluralistic society.

We're so proud of ourselves for being a melting pot. There was no meltier pot in the history of the world than Athens. You're bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore, we want to know what these things mean. For all the athenians in the foreigners who are there, spent their time and nothing else.

But either to tell or to hear Some new thing.

Wasn't a wonderful that they were seeking. No. It was awful that they were ignorant. It was awful that they were agnostic. It was awful that they did not know christ and that they were merely intellectually philosophically. Even spiritually, curious. Spiritual curiosity. Is not a symptom. Of ready to know jesus.

It's a symptom of being without god and without hope in the world because you don't know him yet. Let's see, we're never Well, not never. And just be about 40 minutes from finishing point three, Um, So, i think we'll save verses. 19 to 34. For next. Lord's day. But here's an apostle, his provoked.

Provoked by knowing the risen Lord, jesus. Or you and i provoked. By knowing him. Does it move us to do things that we weren't planning on? Does it change what we would have done with our time? How we would have talked to others. Make us willing to be babbling fools as far as the supposedly sophisticated world.

Is concerned. And is that what we want to persuade people of? Yes, we want people to come to church. Yes, we want people to To stop. Living the lives that are destroying themselves. Yes, we Uh, we want them even to to join the church and have better lives for themselves.

But as the great thing that we want for them, That they would know the god who made the world and everything in it. In the person. Of jesus christ. The resurrected savior. There's much more to do. But we may do anything. Unless we know, And are provoked by. Under your to persuade others of The risen lord, jesus christ.

Amen, let's pray.

Lord jesus, we fall before you. Truly you. Bodily paid for our sins on. The cursive tree. And canceled there, the bill of our debt. So that even in glory you bear the marks of our redemption. The scars in your hand. In your side. And truly, you have bodily risen from the dead.

So that we do not need to put our fingers The hands. Or our hand into the side. But we pray that by your spirits. Convincing us from your word, we would fall before you and cry out our lord. And our god. Oh, forgive us for. We are so easily affected by our temporal circumstances.

And, Um, Not easily affected. By the reality of having been made by, you been made for you and therefore redeemed by you. So that we might know you and live for you.

And we confess that we too easily. See others who don't know, you. And they're not provoked. By the idolatry of judaism or the idolatry. Of pluralism or the idolatry of agnosticism. Or unitarianism.

Our hearts don't break our plans, don't change. Help us lord by your spirit, the same spirit. By whom you gave this word, the same spirit. By whom you worked in the apostle, the same spirit by whom you have given faith to anyone who's ever believed the same spirit, but whom you have sanctified, everyone who has ever believed.

And indeed lord jesus the same spirit by whom you upheld yourself in your own humanity. By whom you raised yourself from the dead. Give us your spirit, we pray. To apply to us and work out in our lives. The fruit of your word. The fruit of your life by means of your word.

For, we ask it in your name. And your people hearsay. Amen.