

- Back in March, we studied through the account of Paul's sermon to the Athenians from **Acts 17:22-31**. Paul recognized the religious nature of the Athenians, and we noted that the city was a hotbed for religious and philosophical thinking and learning. Paul makes the case for the God of heaven being the one true God by listing the unmatched attributes of our God. He teaches that He is the Creator of the universe (**v.24**), the Sustainer of Life (**v.25**), the Ruler of all nations (**v.26**), the Father of all mankind (**vv.28,29**), and the Judge of the world (**v.30**). Paul finishes his sermon by showing God's power through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (**v.31**).
- It is at this point that the people hearing this message have a decision to make. Incredibly, we actually see 3 responses to the Truth of God and His Son Jesus Christ in the last 3 verses of the chapter. I would like for us to discuss these 3 responses to truth because these same 3 responses are still given every single day when some form of truth is presented to a hearer. Every single time truth is presented there will be a response that fits one of these 3 responses. These 3 responses are a result of the heart of the hearer. We are familiar with the parable Jesus gave on the sower, his seed, and the ground that it fell upon in **Matthew 13**. The seed that fell beside the road never had a chance and it was eaten up by the birds. The seed that fell among the rocky and thorny ground couldn't last. But the seed that fell on the good soil, that seed had a chance, it took root, it grew, and it flourished. We see those same kind of responses here in **Acts 17:32-34**, and I'd like for us to study about these reactions this morning so that we can know how to react to those different responses.

I. Some will sneer and reject. (**v.32**)

- A. Some of these people here in Athens were totally opposed to this truth about God because of the resurrection. (**v.32**)
 1. Remember, back in **vv.18-20** these people heard Paul's teachings and realized that He was bringing something new to their hearing.
 2. This God (Unknown God) was shown to be powerful based upon His raising of Jesus from the dead. To some of these people hearing, that was ridiculous and they weren't going to hear anymore about his silly notion of a man being raised from the dead.
 3. That is unfortunate because the resurrection is a big deal within Christianity. (**I Cor. 15**)
 4. But this wasn't the first Jesus or His disciples had to deal with people rejecting the idea of the resurrection.
 5. The Sadducees were a sect of the Jews that didn't believe in the resurrection. (**Matt. 22:23**)
 6. Regardless, Paul still had to deal with this rejection from some after this sermon of God.
- B. Let's be honest, rejection isn't fun.
 1. We might not be rejected simply because of our belief in the resurrection, but there are many other things that people will reject today when it comes to the truth of God's Word.
 2. Rejection hurts. It can cause us to feel inadequate in our sharing of the message, but we must remember that the rejection is based upon the truth of God's Word.
 3. Our job is to simply be ready to give the truth of God to those that will hear it, even at the cost of rejection or a more severe suffering. (**I Peter 3:13-16**)
- C. Sometimes we just need to move on from those who reject to those who would like to hear the message of Jesus Christ.
 1. There comes a time where we just have to dust off our shoes and move on to the next.
 2. Jesus knew this would happen to His disciples and He instructed them to just dust off their sandals and move on to those that are more willing to listen. (**Matt. 10:14**)
 3. We shouldn't waste our time giving that which is so precious to those that want nothing to do with it. Jesus describes this as casting pearls before swine in **Matthew 7:6**.
 4. We should desire to share the Gospel with all of those who are around us because we love God and we love them and their souls, but there comes a time when, if they reject us, we move to those who will hear. Paul didn't let rejection stop him and neither should we.

II. Some will want to hear again, later. (v.32)

- A. While the first group rejected Paul all together, the second group said that they would hear Paul on this again another time. That same response has been given by many today.
 - 1. It is important for us to try to not judge people's motives when they respond in this way. Some will give this response legitimately, but others will use it as an excuse.
 - 2. Of the "excuse" variety: After hearing Paul speak to him of the Gospel, Felix seems to use this excuse to keep Paul around for a little longer in order to possibly get some money out of him. (**Acts 24:26**)
 - 3. Others might have legitimate reasons to delay.
 - a) Some people might really need to consider the truth of a matter before they are willing to commit to it as being true.
 - b) Others might need to sit down and count the cost of what it would mean to obey the Gospel. (**Luke 14:26-33**)
- 4. While those may be legitimate reasons to delay obedience, we must remember that we are not guaranteed that time to be able to hear that person again on the matter of truth.
- B. It is hard for us to allow this to happen, but we can do some things to make sure this type of response doesn't fall through the cracks.
 - 1. We can make sure to set a time for the next opportunity to discuss the matter.
 - 2. We can be persistent in bringing the issue up when in the same company.
 - 3. If all else fails, we can just be exactly what we need to be as a Christian and hope that we can win them through our strong positive influence. (**I Peter 3:1,2**) They might not hear it from us again, but you best believe they will see it living in us.

III. Some will believe and join the faith. (v.34)

- A. The last group in **Acts 17** believed in Paul's message and joined themselves to him.
 - 1. These people had heard these strong and compelling words, they believed them, and they wanted to spend as much time with this wise man as they could.
 - 2. They became Paul's disciples. They wanted to learn as much about this God as they could so that they could be what they needed to be for Him.
- B. This teaches us that our initial obedience to the Gospel isn't a one time thing that ends our journey of faith. In reality, it is only the beginning of our faith.
 - 1. When we decide to put our trust in Jesus then we must deny ourselves and follow after Him. (**Mark 8:34ff**)
 - 2. The people who obeyed in **Acts 2:42ff** continued in the Apostle's doctrine and teachings.
 - 3. Paul said that he had finished the race. (**II Tim. 4:7,8**)
 - 4. These people in **Acts 17** and all people must recognize that accepting the Gospel as truth means that you must be in it for the long haul. We certainly wouldn't want to be one of the people who are described in **II Peter 2:20-22** that escape the evils of this world, but then decide to return to its temporary lusts.

When the truth is presented, there are 3 possible responses that you will see given. Some will mock or sneer and refuse, some will put off a decision for another time, and others will hear, believe, and obey. Our job is to share the Good News and give every soul possible the opportunity to believe and obey. What about us? Are we a people that would believe and obey? May God help us to be that type of people that are willing to deny self, die to self, and live for Jesus in all that we do. God is worthy to be obeyed, so may we humble ourselves before Him.