**Awakening Part 4**

Acts 17:16-34

Paul’s encounter with the Greco Roman Culture here in Acts 17 gives us some insight into what we, as Believers, need to see and understand about the times we live in and the Gospel we are called to.

**#1 – The Condition of the Culture**

Acts 17:16-17

* The Synagogue and the Streets
* Churched
* Unchurched (Alvin Reid)
* De-Churched (Current Day)
* The Unchurched in Paul’s Days
* Gentiles (No background in the Scriptures
* His presentation with them did not start with Jesus but with Creation
* In particular here in Athens
* Named for the Greek Goddess, Athena
* Economically Affluent
* Culturally Diverse
* Developed the first Democracy (had elected officials)
* Noted as the birthplaces of some of the most important people in Western Civilization
* Playwrights, Artist, Historians and Philosophers
* Notably: Socrates, Plato and Aristotle
* By the time Paul entered Athens that day, it had lost some of its greatness
* But still., it was the cultural and intellectual center of the Roman Empire
* The Beauty of the remaining architecture reminder the people of the great times of past prosperity
* It had become defined as a Pluralistic Society (A place of many gods)

In Verse 18, we hear about the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.

* Stoics
* Marked by Materialism
* If it feels good do it
* Epicurians
* Pantheists
* Conservative but not Christian

**Today, we are dealing with something very similar in our culture.**

* We have a rise in Skepticism
* A belief that rejects the idea of ultimate truth
* Also, our culture sees this view as the only intellectual view to hold
* Any view that points to a religious system of belief is archaic or irrelevant
* Anyone who holds to a view that the Bible is true is naïve

Tony Merida (Commentary on the book of Acts)

* There is a growing number of people in Western Culture that would classify themselves as having NO religious affiliation
* According to Pew research, about 1/3 of adults under the age of 30 (Highest percentage to this date)

**What do we do?**

**I think I can answer that by telling you what we should NOT do.**

* We should NOT retreat.
* We live in a culture that desperately needs TRUTH and even though they are rejecting it, they are at the same time seeking it.

**#2 – The Response of the Believer**

 “his spirit was being provoked”

* Usually when we hear the worked “provoked” it leads us to think that Paul was angry.
* This word translated provoked means “*to provoke feelings*, *spurring* someone to action

When Paul saw the condition of the Culture in Athens he was Angry (but not at them)

* Paul’s Anger was mixed with “brokenhearted compassion”
* Paul was motivated by the Great Love (For God and People)

This was the same pattern that Jesus displayed when he looked upon the people He was ministering to:

* **Luke 7:13**, “When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep." (raises the widow’s son)
* **Matthew 9:36**, “Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. (The Harvest is plentiful…)
* **Matthew 14:14**, “When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick. (Feeding of the 5000)
* **Matthew 20:34**, Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him. (2 Blind men)

**I think we tend to have 2 extreme reactions to the condition of our culture:**

* We say nothing
* We speak with ANGER

“As believers we need both gentleness and boldness” (Merida)

We need to be zealous for His NAME and His GLORY.

* Isaiah 26:8

Our anger should not be directed at the Culture but be an Anger because of what the culture doing to the people

* We need to show compassion, because they are broken, Deceived, Damaged, and LOST.

**#3 – The Call to Repentance**

Acts 17:22-32

Paul’s Response to the culture around him was to do what?

* He preached the Gospel

Can an Awakening happen in America?

YES

Awakenings are not uncommon in American History

**The Basic Themes of the Great Awakening were**

* All people are born sinners
* Sin without salvation will send a person to hell
* All people can be saved if they confess their sins to God, seek forgiveness and accept God’s grace
* All people can have a direct and emotional connection with God
* Religion shouldn’t be formal and institutionalized, but rather casual and personal

**The Church has to get this part right.**

**The message of the Church must be clear.**

* **The answer is Jesus**
* **The answer is the Gospel**

**Don’t get distracted by the lure of a culture that thinks we can work, legislate and plan our way out.**

**We need an Awakening!**