

This week I received a link to an interview on the *Voice of the Martyr* radio w/ a missionary to Iran who shared an amazing story of the power/presence of God. B/c this missionary has a target on his back; they obscured his voice and changed his name to protect him. **(play audio file)**

We're in a series in Acts about the **Unstoppable** power of the H.S. in the life of the church and in every believer. In this study, we've again witnessed that the Christian life has never been nor will ever be a work of the human ability and ingenuity, but solely the work of the H.S. This truth was never more obvious than in the missionary journeys of Paul. As Paul made himself available to God, God worked thru him and his mates to see the church explode throughout the world. In every city they visited, just like in Iran today, the truth of Jesus was shared, the H.S. moved, and the church exploded. **And as we've just heard, the same God who was moving in Acts then is still on the move today.**

But are we experiencing Him or settling for some manmade religious experience that's safe, comfortable, and tame? I fear in the modern U.S. church, we've settled for the latter.

While we can stop in any of the cities where Paul stopped on His journeys, I want to take a few min. to revisit Athens.

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue w/ both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, and in the marketplace day by day w/ those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate w/ him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this b/c Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean." (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.) Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar w/ this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship – and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he

marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone – an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world w/ justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead." When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." At that, Paul left the Council. Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

Paul has traveled to the seat of human identity/ingenuity – the very center of the philosophical/religious world to present the simple truth of the Gospel. He started in the religious centers and marketplace, until finally, he is granted an audience at Mars Hill before the Areopagus (Greek supreme court) – where he once again, under the influence of the H.S. presents the love/grace of God embodied in Jesus. He got them to contemplate the Divine.

In thinking on this moment, I'm reminded of a sermon intro by Spurgeon in 1855 on the Immutability of God.

It's been said by someone that the proper study of mankind is man. I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity... Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief; and in the influence of the H.S., there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrows? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of grief and sorrow; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead.

Paul was inviting the Athenians into a musing of the Divine – he was affording them a chance to encounter the H.S.

Before we partake in the communion table, I'd like to take a few minutes to contemplate Paul's defense on Mars Hill.

I God EXISTS

“People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar w/ this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.

Paul recognizes and commends them in their belief of God. Truth is in every culture/society in history, there's been a deeply held belief there is a higher being than man.

In a recent Pew Research Poll – 77% of Americans across all religious lines still believe in a superior being w/ only 7% claiming to be agnostic/atheist – 16% believe nothing.

A few years ago I taught on this subject in the series – **Call Me Crazy**. Let me encourage you to go online and watch it. the topic of God's existence, we discussed the common sense of what I call the Big (3).

Cosmological Argument says b/c there's a universe in existence there had to be someone to have caused it.

Teleological Argument says b/c we have a complex design w/ order there had to be an Intelligent Designer.

Axiological Argument *Morality Argument* says b/c man has a moral conscious to a moral law there had to be a Lawgiver.

II God Existence can be EXPERIENCED

Paul explains that God is not some unknown, distant entity – but that He can be seen/understood as our creator/sustainer – b/c In Jesus, He is the sovereign ruler/Savior over all.

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone – an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world w/ justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising Him from the dead."

Paul introduces the Athenians to the person/work of Jesus explaining how God in the flesh came to rescue humanity from their sinful condition. He's repeating Jesus/Peter.

Jesus said – *I am the way, the only truth, and the only life. No one can come to the Father except by me.* Jn. 14:6

Peter said – *Salvation is found in no one else; no other name has been given to us by which we can be saved.* Acts 4:12

No founder of any religion has dared to claim for himself one fraction of the assertions made by Jesus about himself. No religion has claimed for its founder what Christianity has claimed for the Christ. *Henry Heydt*

So what does this mean for us here today?

A Faith is not a Matter of SINCERITY

It's possible to be sincerely wrong. There's no advantage to sincerity if you've put your faith in a non-existent god.

The guy from CA who was going to shoot himself into orbit on a rocket to prove the earth is flat – can believe the earth is flat but his shenanigans won't change that the earth is round.

I sincerely believed Tech had a chance yesterday vs UGA – but I was sincerely wrong.

B Faith is not a Matter of OPINION

An opinion is a strongly held belief/estimation that can't be substantiated or validated although it is believed or desired.

Just b/c the masses pool their ignorance based on unreliable opinion/popular vote – doesn't make it true.

We may all be wrong but we all can't be right!

C Faith is a Matter of FACT

What does the evidence say? Can it be substantiated? Either Jesus was God in the flesh who died on the cross to rescue humanity or...

He's was either a liar, lunatic, legend, or He is the Lord.