

He is Not Far

Acts 17:24–28

[24] The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, [25] nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. [26] And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, [27] that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, [28] for

“In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we are indeed his offspring.”

I feel so stirred in my heart today by the Love of the Father – He is not far from each one of us...

He is not far...

Romans 8:37-39 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing can separate you from the Love of God – are their distractions in your life today?
Nothing can separate you from His love - NOTHING

Zephaniah 3:17 The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

He will quiet you by His love... He will quiet the bustling and the business – He will quiet you...

Jeremiah 31:3 The Lord appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

He has continued His faithfulness – All my life you have been faithful – All my life you have been so so Good -

Ephesians 2:4-5 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

We were dead in our trespasses – and God made us ALIVE!

1 John 3:1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

You are a child of God! You are an heir of the promise!

Oh what Love the Father has – In Acts Chapter 17 I find three themes that I believe are necessary responses from the Love of God.

The love and grace of God is a mystery.

David Wilkerson call it “an aching embrace”

It pulls us out of our mess and into His heart. Grace isn’t a license to sin but an empowerment to live righteously. It's God saying, "I love you too much to leave you where you are."

Grace is not passive. It demands a response. It beckons us to Him.

The world may mock, it may persecute, but the eternal weight of glory far surpasses momentary afflictions.

In Acts 17 I feel we see three things that the Love of God demands of us. The first is to tell others.

We must tell others.

In Acts 17 we are right in the middle of the Apostle Paul’s second missionary journey. Now this journey looked very different that what we consider missions work today – this was a journey of wherever God would lead.

Many have looked over the direction that Paul took in his travels to try and find some rhyme or reason and we can’t really find one – because the entire time they were being led by the Spirit.

They traveled through Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe cities of “Galatia” traveling toward Asia – what is now just western Turkey, but the Holy Ghost redirected them.

In Troas God gave Paul a dream of a man in Macedonia that was pleading for them to come and help him... and so they went to Macedonia – the World is aching for the embrace of God’s grace.

I believe the Holy Spirit still desires to direct us – I want Him to direct me.

We read about their time in Phillipi – this is when they were imprisoned for casting a demon out of a young girl – and God set them free – at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God and the place was shaken.

I believe the Holy Spirit still has the power to loose chains – Bro Robbins in Maximum Security Prison -

Apostolic - Paul witnessed the jailer – they were eventually freed and then they went to Thessalonica.

In Thessalonica Paul went to the Synagogue to teach and many there believed – but many got angry and formed a mob – lying about them to incite anger.

The disciples whisk Paul away and take him to Berea – and what does he do? Goes to the temple and begins to tell them about Christ. The Bereans receive the truth – but the people from Thessalonica come to incite a mob there too – and so the disciples move Paul again.

This time He comes to Athens.

16 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city. 17 He went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and he spoke daily in the public square to all who happened to be there.

Look around! Our world is in turmoil, souls are in agony, and hearts are broken.

We fill our lives with fleeting pleasures, hoping to quench a thirst that only the Living Water can satisfy.

We must tell them.

The second lesson that I see in Acts 17 is that our lives are full of Idols and as a response to God's love we have to **do away with idols**.

19 Then they took him to the high council of the city. "Come and tell us about this new teaching," they said. 20 "You are saying some rather strange things, and we want to know what it's all about." 21 (It should be explained that all the Athenians as well as the foreigners in Athens seemed to spend all their time discussing the latest ideas.)

22 So Paul, standing before the council, addressed them as follows: "Men of Athens, I notice that you are very superstitious in every way, 23 for as I was walking along, I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: 'To an Unknown God.' This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I'm telling you about.

Let's pause for a moment – the altar to the "Unknown God" was not an altar built for Jehovah. It was an altar that was just built incase they missed one.

When Paul points out the altar he is pointing out something in their World – this is one of the given examples where we see Paul doing what he described when he said I have become all things to all men.

Paul wasn't worshipping the "Unknown God" – nor was he justifying their numerous idolatry – he was simply using a picture of what was in their world to point to Jesus –

What can you use to point to Jesus?

24 “He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, 25 and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need.

What need has captivated your heart and mind?

Athens isn’t the only city that is full of idols – I’m afraid Austin is as well. Pflugerville and Round Rock – but the one who loves us – He satisfies every need.

He calls to us – quit seeking fulfillment from gold and silver and things fashioned with the thoughts and hands of man.

27 “His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us. 28 For in him we live and move and exist... ‘We are his offspring.’

I have good news today – He isn’t far from you. You can find him.

He is ready to walk into your heart and your life and heal and deliver and work – and be known. He is not far.

29 And since this is true, we shouldn’t think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone.

Shall we dispense with the idols... they will not do us any good.

We fashion them with gold and silver and then we have to nail them down so they don’t fall over...

The final response...

Acts 17:30–31

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to *repent*, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

Paul, standing in the heart of Athens—a city steeped in human-made philosophy and idol worship—issues a universal call to repentance.

This was not a call borne out of anger or frustration, but one rooted in God's profound love and grace.

2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

Repentance is perhaps most easily grasped in the act of turning – away from sin and toward him.

Romans 2:4 "Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?"

When I think of His faithfulness – His unfailing love and kindness – I am overwhelmed by my inadequacy and frailty –

In our weakness He is made strong –

The doctor is longing for someone to come to him -