

Getting a Grip on Him

Scripture Reading — Acts 17:16-34

“I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god.”

Acts 17:23 —

Athens is often called the birthplace of democracy and the cradle of Western civilization. It’s the home of Plato, Pericles, and the Parthenon. The city has had enormous influence in its 3,400 years of recorded history. No wonder the apostle visited there.

How did Paul present the gospel in Athens? First, he walked the city and paid close attention to its religious monuments, even though he found them disturbing. Second, he visited the Jewish synagogue and shared Christ with both Jews and Gentiles there. Third, he did the same in the Athenian marketplace. Fourth, he accepted an invitation to speak at the Areopagus, a Greek court revived to new respect under Roman rule. And, finally, Paul used local references to tease out what Athenians knew of

God—an inscription to an “unknown god” and popular descriptions of the Supreme God in Greek poetry.

Paul’s goal was to present Christ crucified, the risen Lord and final Judge of virtue. Like Socrates, he wanted listeners to admit ignorance and fall in love with the highest Good. However, Christ can’t be received by intellectual arguments. He can only be received as a gift through faith. As Dionysius and Damaris discovered, not only did Paul’s speech redefine love, justice, and religion; it had the power to change lives. Even in splendid Athens.

Prayer

Lord, our culture too gropes after you. Give us wisdom to build bridges of understanding that connect with the lost. Amen.

Devotion topics: [Bible](#), [The Gospel](#), [Christianity](#), [Discipleship](#)

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Printed on July 9, 2020

