

"Culture and the Christian Worldview" - part 2
Acts 17:16-34

INTRODUCTION

I. Engaging the Culture You're In (vv.16-21)

- A. Trust God's sovereign placement of your life
 - 1. Location (We are sometimes so eager for a change, yet we've not engaged the culture where we've been placed. Why do we think we'll change somewhere else?)
 - 2. In the religious circles
 - a) For the Epicurean, life's goal was pleasure—the lack of physical pain and emotional disturbance. Stoics were more popular, opposed pleasure, and criticized Epicureans
 - b) Paul attacks both before it's over. Not through a rigid system absent of pleasure, but a greater pleasure in the God who has relieved men of an impossible burden
 - c) We see marks of these even within our churches, particularly in the west.
 - 3. In the marketplace
- B. Open your eyes to your surroundings
 - 1. Not regarding others according to the flesh
 - 2. Seeing the spiritual climate
 - 3. Paul was incited. He was provoked to the point of anger (righteous indignation)
- C. The "target" is who God gives to listen

D. The message is unchanged in content

II. Engaging the Culture by Exposing Idols (vv.16,22-23)

- A. We are blind to others' idols if we have our own
 - 1. God regularly protected and disciplined Paul through suffering to depend upon Him
 - 2. Persecution helped keep Paul focused on His one treasure
 - 3. Tim Keller gets this right in his book, *Counterfeit Gods*. He speaks of how the American church is just as materialistic as the world, and we cannot see idols clearly
- B. The burden for lostness heightens when we see the idols of culture
- C. Our response to seeing idols is proclamation (beginning with the religious)
 - 1. Distinguishing religion from worship
 - 2. Paul never endorses their behavior, he only acknowledges it
 - 3. The emphasis is on the God who is, not the gods who are not
 - 4. We expose idols through the proclamation of the one True God and His Gospel
 - 5. In what Paul says true about God, he is challenging their erroneous views of the "unknown god"

III. Engaging the Culture with the Gospel (vv.24-31)

- A. God
 - 1. God is
 - 2. God is Creator and Sustainer of all

3. God is Independent (self-sufficient, happy, sovereign)
4. God is to be Glorified

B. Man

1. Man is created
2. Man is dependent upon God
3. Man should seek God
4. Man does not seek God because He wants to be a god
5. Man is a sinner
6. Man will be judged

C. Christ

1. God in the flesh
2. Took man's just judgment of sin on Himself
3. Raised from the dead
4. Gives His righteousness to His own

D. Response

1. Repentance
2. Faith

IV. Trusting God with the Results (vv.32-34)

- A. Some will mock, some will listen further
- B. God will always have a witness
- C. We are not the end-all for every believer's development (but this is why He planted His church locally in every culture) - remember, the principles here are taken from Paul's life, but we are the church

- D. This was the cadence of Paul's life and ministry (**Acts 28:24**, "And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved.")

IV. Some Principles for engaging culture

- A. Be circumspect in your view
- B. Be courteous in your approach (while enraged at idolatry in culture)
- C. Be coherent of your circumstances
- D. Be clear in your proclamation
- E. Be calm in the results

INTRODUCTION

- What about you? Are you pursuing your life minimizing pain and promoting fleshly pleasure? Perhaps you are one who is very religious, denying yourself worldly pleasures, believing that your more ascetic lifestyle will cause God to love you enough to save you? CHRIST CAN DELIVER YOU!
- What about you, church? Are you engaging culture where you're planted? Are you willing to adjust your preferences and culture in order to reach those God has us to reach? Are you courteous toward outsiders, or only your friends here? When's the last time you made the gospel plain to another human being?