

Make Him Known; Acts 17:21-23

I. Spinning Your Wheels

- A. Acts 17:21 (ESV); Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.
- B. “To waste time; to remain in a neutral position, neither advancing nor falling back. (Fig. on a car that is running but is not moving because its wheels are spinning in mud, etc.)”¹
- C. We are engaged in pursuits that, in the end, make no difference in our Christianity
 - 1. Please don’t misunderstand, I know we all must work, and we have hobbies that we enjoy
 - 2. But in the end, work and hobbies are not what Christianity is all about
 - 3. In the end, our task is so much more than everyday living (God even tells us not to worry about everyday living in Matthew 6)
 - 4. Ecclesiastes 12:13 (ESV); The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.
- D. The majority of the Athenians were not looking to act on any new thing they heard, they just wanted to listen; they were just “spinning their wheels.”
- E. Acts 17:32 (ESV); Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.”

II. Religious

- A. Acts 17:22 (ESV); So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.
- B. Just because someone is religious does not mean they are saved
 - 1. Many people have a different understanding of salvation
 - 2. To some it is self-enlightenment, we become our own gods
 - 3. To others it is a physical gift of paradise for doing well in this world
 - 4. For Christians, it should be the cleansing of our past, present, and future sins with the aim of loving God (obeying His commandments, 1 John 5:3) and loving our neighbors (meeting their needs, Luke 10:25-37)
- C. Acts 17:16–19 (ESV);¹⁶ Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.¹⁸ Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babblers wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.¹⁹ And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?”
- D. Paul saw their idols and the uselessness of their religions and just had to make known to them the unknown

III. Unknown to Known

- A. Acts 17:23 (ESV); For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.
- B. There was a time when God was not explicitly explained to people
 - 1. Yes, the heavens declare Him

¹ "spin wheels." McGraw-Hill Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal Verbs. 2002. The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. 22 Feb. 2017 <http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/spin+wheels>

2. Romans 1:20 (ESV); For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.
 3. But God also understands that people need to hear the word of God
 4. Romans 10:13–17 (ESV); ¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” ¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
- C. It is our task to make Him known!
1. “Preach the Gospel at all times, and if necessary use words.” Attributed (incorrectly) to Saint Francis of Assisi
 2. We would twist this into meaning that we have no need to preach using words, but only actions
 3. “It is no use walking anywhere to preach unless our walking is our preaching.” St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226)
 4. Maybe St. Francis got his idea from Paul because Paul's lives and breaths the Gospel of Jesus (in word and in deed)
 5. Acts 20:33–35 (ESV); ³³ I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”
- D. We must become like Paul (and yes, Christ)
1. He tells us to imitate him (yes, as he imitates Christ)
 2. Jesus' words were always accompanied by actions
 3. Paul acted out His Christianity as he preached
 4. 1 Corinthians 4:14–17 (ESV); ¹⁴ I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. ¹⁵ For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ¹⁶ I urge you, then, be imitators of me. ¹⁷ That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.
 5. Paul says similar things to the churches in Ephesus (Ephesians 5:1), Philippi (Philippians 3:17), and Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:7, 9).
- IV. Make Him Known
- A. We need to stop spinning our wheels
 - B. We must be religious according to God's definition
 - C. We need to preach the Gospel both in word and actions