

## Whatever Is True

Acts 17:16–35

Each day, it's important to take your bearings. Where are you today? In the Easter season, in the scriptures, in your daily life, in your very self? Spend a few minutes getting your bearings for the day.

Let's briefly examine where we are in the Book of Acts and then begin our day with a prayer for deliverance—for ourselves, our fraternity brothers, and all Exodus Men.

You are fighting through difficulties. Whenever we set out on mission, there will be many obstacles. We have to remain faithful, no matter the challenge, and look for new ways to witness to Jesus.

Pray that the Lord grants deliverance to you, your family, and your fraternity.

Pray for freedom for all men in Exodus, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who have taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that in the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## A Reading from the Book of Acts

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. So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the market place every day with those who chanced to be there. Some also of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers met him. And some said, "What would this babblers say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he preached Jesus and the resurrection. And they took hold of him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you present? For you bring some strange things to our ears; we wish to know therefore what these things mean." Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

So Paul, standing in the middle of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. And he made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined

allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.' Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men 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 men by raising him from the dead."

Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; but others said, "We will hear you again about this." So Paul went out from among them. But some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

### Reflection

Paul usually began preaching in the synagogue and would continue conversations with those interested. In Athens, he entered one of his day's main stages for communicating thought. The Athenians loved to think about and appreciate beauty. How would he compare to the ideas of the philosophers and poets? He tried to connect with them by quoting pagan poets (Epimenides and Aratus). However, there was one point of Paul's teaching that went too far for them: the persistence of the body after death. The Greeks knew that the body deteriorates quickly and, therefore, looked only to the transcendent realm for what could last. Plato had taught about transcendent ideas, particularly the Good, which only the soul could access.

At first, Paul appeared to flop as the resurrection of the dead seemed absurd to the Athenians. It was not a complete failure, however. Some of the Greeks were interested in hearing him again, and the speech did make converts. He did not take Athens by storm, but God did call forth fruit.

Paul's speech had an even greater lasting significance. In this speech to the Athenians and in his later letter to the Philippians, he explains that Christians should embrace whatever is true and good:

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.  
(Philippians 4:8)

As Christians, we can embrace truth, goodness, and beauty wherever we find them, so long as we judge rightly about what is truly worthy of attention. Like Paul's defense of the resurrection, we see that our faith affirms the goodness of this world and our own bodies, which were made by God. We do not have a puritanical attitude that sees material things or even pleasure as evil. The problem arises when good things are not ordered properly to God. We should use all things for the glory of God.

Bring this thought to prayer, reflecting on how we use or misuse the good things of this world.

#### Week 5 Action Items

Pray about your mission.

Watch an uplifting movie.

Stay vigilant with technology use.