

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 18TH–19TH, 2026 // THE BOOK OF ACTS

UPSIDE DOWN (ACTS 17:1–9)

THE FORMULA

After leaving Philippi, Paul and Silas went to Thessalonica. “As usual, [they] went into the synagogue” to teach ethnic Jews and Greek converts that “it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and rise from the dead.”

- Also, as usual, they had more success with the “God-fearing Greeks.”

A RIOT IN THESSALONICA

Some of the “Jews became jealous” and got some corrupt people from the marketplace to help them form a mob and start a riot. After not finding Paul and Silas, they went after Jason because he had “welcomed them.”

- Jason was an obscure Christian who hosted a Christian meeting place in Thessalonica.

“WHO HAVE TURNED THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN”

Paul and Silas were not being being targeted for breaking written laws but for proclaiming there was a higher authority than Caesar. Jason was targeted for showing them hospitality.

- **Placing Jesus as our ultimate authority and submitting to the Word will 100% upend our lives and positively impact others.**

NOBLES (ACTS 17:10–15)

PEOPLE OF “MORE NOBLE CHARACTER”

After Jason was released from jail, the Christians in Thessalonica sent Paul and Silas to Berea. Luke writes that the people in Berea were of “noble character.”

- Though they didn’t follow Jesus yet, they had **strong morals** and valued **integrity, courage, compassion, and humility.**

THOROUGH OBJECTIVE EXAMINATION

They also “received the Word with eagerness” and **objectively examined** the Scriptures. “Consequently, many of them believed.”

- When we **humbly desire to know truth and approach that pursuit objectively, we inevitably intersect with the Bible and are impacted by its message.**

ATHENS (ACTS 17:16–21)

A REMARKABLE HISTORY

Athens was the hub for worship of 12 Olympian gods and dozens of minor gods, with sites dedicated to war heroes, and local spirits.

- Greeks were also arguably the most brilliant society ever. They established geometry, astronomy, mechanics, democracy, and modern philosophy.

DISTRESSED WITH A CITY FULL OF IDOLS

The intellectual capital was also the idolatry capital. There were 30,000 public idols in a city of only 10,000. This spiritual and religious confusion greatly disturbed Paul.

- We see Paul **kept his emotions in check** and “**reasoned**” with Jews in the synagogue and people in the marketplace.

WE CAN LEARN A LOT FROM PAUL IN ATHENS

There will always be certain kinds of people we connect better with, but **as Christians**, we should **desire for all people to be saved, treat everyone with dignity and respect, and strive to find common ground with** virtually everyone **without compromising biblical truths.**

SPEAKING OF COMMON GROUND

Epicurean and Stoic philosophy greatly differs from Biblical teaching, but there are some shared ideas with ethics and logic. Paul was able to connect in Athens because he had taken the time to learn their philosophy.

- We can use life experiences, pop culture, geography, etc. as a means to connect.

WE LIVE IN A VERY SIMILAR SOCIETY

Greek/Roman culture was both intellectual and carnal—and also very condescending towards people who didn’t agree with them.

- **How we respond is important.** We’re not to isolate from people but to **engage** with **love, empathy, grace, logic, and truth via the power and guidance of the Spirit.**

INVITED TO SHARE “SOMETHING NEW”

The Athenians loved learning, and many of them would spend the majority of their time talking of philosophy and “telling or hearing something new.”

- There were some who wanted to learn about Jesus, who “sound[ed] strange to [them],” and invited Paul to the Areopagus.

THE TRUTH (ACTS 17:22–34)

THE AREOPAGUS (OR MARS HILL)

Mars Hill was a rocky hill next to the Acropolis (Parthenon), where the most intellectual, influential, and powerful people would meet.

- Paul was also intelligent and knew that condemnation wouldn’t be effective in reaching the Athenians. So, he appealed to their sense of religion and worship.

“TO AN UNKNOWN GOD”

The Greeks built altars to unknown gods to ensure all religious bases were covered. So, they acknowledged a higher power but worshiped with ignorance. Paul sought to fill in the gap.

- He informed them that there is only **one God**, He **created all things**, and He **isn’t confined to temples.**

HE IS ALSO A LOVING, PERSONAL GOD

The knowledge that God doesn’t need human effort but “**gives everyone life and breath and all things,**” along with the fact that **He created us so that we “might seek [Him]”** because “**He is not far from each of us,**” would have been provocative information to Greeks and Romans.

“EVEN SOME OF YOUR POETS HAVE SAID” (V. 28)

Paul used the similar teachings of Stoic philosopher Aratus, who believed we all came from a divine force, to show that we actually do, and that “force” is Jesus (Colossians 1:16).

- **All truth is God’s truth.** With wisdom, **we can use truths in pop culture to connect people to the ultimate truth of Jesus.**

WE CANNOT CREATE THE DIVINE (V. 29)

Paul says, “**we shouldn’t think that the divine nature is...an image fashioned by human art and imagination.**” Simply put, we are made in the image of God and have no power to make a god in our image.

- **Many professing Christians try to create a Jesus who molds to their preferences.**

“GOD, NOW COMMANDS ALL PEOPLE...TO REPENT”

God will show grace for our ignorance for a certain amount of time, but when the information of Jesus becomes available, we are held accountable for what we hear.

- We have the info to be saved and have been warned by the Word that God has “set a day when [Jesus] is going to judge the world.”

BACK TO A DESIRE TO WANT TO KNOW THE TRUTH

Greeks believed in an eternal soul, but the physical resurrection of Jesus would have been very hard to grasp. This caused many to “ridicule him,” but others were intrigued and wanted to hear more.

- The man and woman mentioned were very prominent people in Athens.

ARE WE OF NOBLE CHARACTER?

- The Bereans were open-minded, hungry for knowledge, and people of humility, integrity, compassion, and courage.

- **Are we people who desire to know the truth and examine it objectively in order to grow closer to God and contribute back the world around us?**

TURNING THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

- If we objectively pursue truth, we will find Jesus and the Bible (Matthew 7:7). When we find the truth, we must understand that living it out will flip our world upside down.

- Change can be scary, but **the more we learn who God is via prayer and Scripture, the more we trust that His ways are good!**

GOD WANTS US TO ENGAGE OTHERS

- Salvation, love, and freedom in Christ are meant to be shared with others because God desires for all to know him (2 Peter 3:9).

- To do this, we must be **full of the Spirit**; love others; **show respect, grace, and empathy**; find **common ground**; and **not withhold or compromise biblical truth.**

IMPERATIVE INFORMATION

- There is **one God**, He is the **Creator**, He is **personal**, His Son died and rose for our salvation, and any other “god” is useless.

- **There is a standard by which we are to live explained to us through God’s Word.** We are to pray, read and obey His Word, and repent of (turn from) the evil we do.

- **We don’t have forever to decide if we want to follow Jesus.** One day, He will return and “judge the world in righteousness.”

- It is not God’s desire that anyone go to Hell, but **in this life, we choose what we will receive in the afterlife:** an eternity with God or completely void of Him.

- If we **objectively seek truth, submit, and grow** in our relationship with Him, **we will not only be saved but evolve more into His image.**

- **A god fashioned in our image is powerless to save us.** Unlike the gods of our creation, Jesus offers us something perfect and eternal.