

What is the purpose of Life.... What are you seeking?

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Acts 17:16-17 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, **his spirit was stirred** in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. [17] Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

The apostle Paul went to Athens the centre of Greek learning, a city where idol worship seemed to affect everyone. Their lives were full and very buisy yet at the same time their lives were so empty. Lives so busy, but lives with no real purpose. They loved gaining knowledge, yet had so little knowledge of the spiritual things that really matter, heavenly things and eternal life. So little knowledge of TRUTH.

OUR SUBJECT Missing the point of Life. The classical Greek word for sin is 'Harmartia' - it describes an archer shooting at a target in a competition and missing the bulls eye. Or it describes taking a wrong road. We are not talking about shooting arrows or taking a wrong road we are talking about LIFE. The Apostle Paul looked at the people of Athens he was moved thay had missed the mark, they had gone down the wrong road.

"His spirit was provoked with him" He saw them Wholly given to Idols. He came to this great city a city of men with great minds, Philosophers, and poets, artists and builders It was the art centre of the world at the time. It was the centre of learning. The Architecture was outstanding. *The Parthenon* A temple of great beauty although a marvel of a building, it was not listed as one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. **But The Apostle Paul was not impressed by these great things.** Paul was a man whose Eyes God had opened, he sees more than just the natural sights, **He sees the reality of their situation,** He is stirred in His Spirit. He sees men given to Idolatry. He knew that in spite of their great achievements that they were still Lost. The great talent and ability that they had was just wasted. - He saw the shallowness, the emptiness of their existence, he saw their pride and arrogance thinking they were more educated and better than outsiders. He Longed to tell them about the true purpose for Live ...

But they didn't think much of the Apostle. V18. *Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.*

They were very insulting thinking they knew best. They had no Idea that the Apostle had a message of Life for them. They called him, this **'babbler.'** Which means in the original **'this seed picker.'** Just someone, like a bird that picks up seeds here and there,

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a little here and a little there, or like someone who loiters around the market place, picking up a substance, whatever, may by chance may fall from the loads of merchandise. Meaning He was like a Begger to be despised like a parasite. **But No, He was not a babbler not a seed picker, not a Begger not a Parasite.** He was a proclaimer of the Living Word of God. A man who when on his journey came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. He Fell to the ground and heard a voice, 'Why are you persecuting me.' Saul knew immediately it was the Lord. Who are you LORD. *"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."* **A man with a definite commission, and a calling from the Risen One.** A man who had already suffered much in the service of Christ. A man with a soul burning with love for his fellowmen, who knows no fear, and is prepared to face all the wisdom of the Greeks, in the name of his Lord and Master. **A preacher who has always a message, and who is never ashamed of the Gospel.**

When we look at these Philosophers at Athens – it's surprising how similar they are to people of today. **These Epicureans**, who placed so much on seeking pleasure, especially drink and fine food. Also, **Stoic Philosophers** that simply just accept and submit to whatever happens in life, a kind of **a grin and bear it attitude**. They were **emotionally detached from all feeling** and pain and pleasure, just accepting whatever comes. Be the master of your emotions. **It's easy to see the people in Athens, are so like, so similar to people of today** who make it their chief goal in life to seek happiness. Their whole lives are devoted to pleasure. Some are **living for sports**, others living to satisfy **the many appetites man has**, and others for **the enjoyment of fashionable amusements**. Today we see **Lovers of Materialism**. The common thinking seems to be that the one who was able to gather the most riches, the best clothing, best car, best house, is the most successful in Life.

Paul has open eyes, and he saw through all they had, he saw their lives empty and hollow and not the goal of life. **He longed to tell them the true Goal of life.** He could see what they could not see. They may have **had so much**, they may have been **very talented** yet we can be sure they lay on their beds at night wondering Asking themselves, **what's the meaning of Life**. Why am I here on this earth. **Houses full of earthly treasure, bank accounts full, but empty hearts, lonely hearts fearful hearts, troubled hearts.**

I read how one of the old writers penned it :- How Can it be that our main Goal is to **sing and to play and to dress and to eat** *and we can add in our age-* to watch all sorts of

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entertainment. **Is this not just like** a young boy, **Seeking Butterflies Grasshoppers and Canary birds.** Just shallow and childish. Yes, a young boy may have this as his goal, may seek these things... but surely, us.. who have grown up, we are seeking much more, we think we are not wasting our time when we seek **Success, position and power,** and **seek to be happy** and **seek pleasure.** Or seek to avoid all pain, all worry, all fears. **Listen these were the things the Philosophers were seeking.** The common thread amongst them was a desire for freedom. **PAUL HAS SOMETHING TO TELL THEM...** they don't think He has but He has. They couldn't see something more than what they could touch and own and buy and sell.

Suppose a person had all these things that they were seeking; **would they satisfy the longing of your soul.** Would having many things give you true purpose in life. Does the life of seeking only the temporal satisfy? **NO, IT IS SO FAR FROM SATISFYING.** In reality no one could be further from happiness than those who live only for this worlds treasure and pleasure. **If you know no higher purpose of life than these; things seen and touched and owned. If you have no understanding that you will live forever and forever.** Then Listen to the Word of God, **listen to the message the Apostle Paul gives to the people of Athens.** There is a higher purpose. A way that is more beautiful than anything you have ever seen. A way of freedom from sin and fear and having no purpose.

The people of Athens were going to hear this life-giving message at Mars

Hill. V19 *And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, (air ee OP ah gus) saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak?"*

A place in the very centre of the city. The evangelist stood all alone in the midst of that open-air court, while the dignitaries sat on the seats that were cut out in the rocks around Him, he was occupying the leading pulpit of the city. It was a bold stand that he took, but although he was alone, he believed, and He knew, that the Lord who stood by him. Paul counted this a great privilege for his Master's sake. He did not fear **this most critical crowd, perhaps the most critical congregation, a preacher has ever had to preach to.** The Apostle was accused of being a '*setter forth of strange gods*' Introducing a foreign God. Bringing strange things to their ears. He would soon convince some of them. He would come out in Triumph.

V21 *For all the Athenians and foreigners who were there spent their time on nothing else but either telling or hearing something new.* They desired to know more of it, **only because it was new and strange:** *"May we know what this new doctrine is?"*

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It's a little like the many people today fascinated by the latest and greatest – the new, the sensational. Always longing to see, and experience something new. A new TV series, a new fashion, a new restaurant in the city have you been, have you tasted. Spending ALL their time on nothing else.

The Apostle starts His preaching to them. *He stood, Men of Athens I perceive that in all things you are very religious.* He is showing respect to them, Saying I see above all you are very religious, or superstitious. Indeed, they did pride themselves that they had more Gods than any other people over 30 thousand!, So they listened -

For I was passing through, walking through your streets I have seen an alter with this Inscription, **"The Unknown God"** The one whom you worship I proclaim to you. The Greek word for unknown God has a wider meaning – the God that cannot be known.

The unknowable God- They knew nothing of His supernatural power, His grace, His forgiveness that was available. How can we pray to an unknown god expecting comfort from an unknown god. What peace, what rest, what joy can come from an unknown god. **Many people in our "modern" enlightened society** treat God in the same as these people in Athens did God is unknown to them. They will pray to God with the following attitude, "God, if you exist, if you are there, I have never been much of a religious person, but if you do exist, I just want you to know that I do believe--if you are there". These Athenians had an altar to the unknown god 'just in case'. Do you know some people go to Church just in case God does really exist as in insurance policy they pray just in case there will be a judgement, but it is nothing more than lip service their hearts are far away from God. They KNOW NOT GOD. *But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'* Luke 13:27

Wouldn't you rather be someone like the Apostle who can say I KNOW IN WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED Like David the Psalmist, THIS I KNOW GOD IS FOR ME.

So, Paul tells them this is God who made heaven and earth. **One God, not many Gods** Who made everything in it. He is Lord of Heaven and Earth He doesn't dwell in temples made by human hands. Paul was so close to the great Parthenon temple – that they all knew – as great as it is, God doesn't dwell there. He is much greater; He gives life and breath to all things. Then He tells them every person is accountable to God and that His providence extends to everyone. we see in **V26 He made Every nation** from one blood, **Boldly he was telling them** that their national pride and thinking they were better than others was wrong -they were not better than other nations or tribes, God created all from one blood. **Then he tells them that every person on the face of**

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the earth is not just left to fate. God has pre appointed their times, their boundaries of their dwellings. God predetermined you would be born in Kenya – predetermined you would live where you live. Even predetermined how long you would live. **He isn't distant. He isn't uncaring-** He knows your name, He knows your standing up He knows you sitting down. He knows how many hairs are upon your head. He is very near. He is not far away. He has appointed everything pertaining your life. He is granting you breath and life. **Why?** *V27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.*

He is saying pleasure isn't the Greatest good. But that **the greatest good can only be found by seeking God.** He is encouraging them to seek their creator. **Who is not unknowable but can be known.** He is saying you don't have to spend your entire lifetime groping in darkness for God that rather he is very very near. You receive blessings from him every day, breath in your nostrils. You were created in His image. The evidence of His existence is seen daily. He causes trees to bud and blossom and bring forth fruit. He causes the sun to rise every day. He calls forth the host of heaven all the stars are present every night and none are missing.

We are a privileged people today. What the prophets of old longed to know we know. There is a redeemer the Mystery of the Gospel has been revealed. The hidden wisdom is made known. The way of salvation, the way sin is atoned for. Jesus Christ Came to give the gift of Eternal life. For the wages of sin *is* death, **but the gift of God *is* eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord. *John 10:28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.* We all will live for ever. But here eternal life means more than living forever - I give them **justification** I give them **perfect righteousness**; I give them **adoption into the family**. We think of the verse *John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

That they may know you, **Oh do you know Him**, Do you have Spiritual life , divine life, and fellowship with Him who lives in you. Do you know Him who is is true; Do we live and move and have our being in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, Jesus Christ and eternal life.

Now in the next verse *V30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,* Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the World in righteousness by the man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance to this by raising Him from the dead.

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There are a number of motivations to repent, this being one. **Because there is an appointed day, a day where he will judge the world in RIGHTEOUSNESS.** There will be no miscarriage of JUSTICE. Every secret and hidden thing will be exposed. They had no idea that Judgement Day was coming – they had no idea that God was a righteous God. For their gods were just the same as them did the same sins even to a greater degree. Whenever the Apostle preaches whether the Philosophers at Mars Hill or the people on the Island of Malta, or whether he reasoned with the Jews in the Synagogue, he had one message and that was Christ and Him crucified, with great urgency, and deep concern He preached SALVATION.

In closing we see - When they heard about the resurrection some scorned it. V32 *And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter."* Some mocked! How hard man's heart is to dismiss such a vital truth, counting it just a fable and a story. Yet deep down if they are honest, it does prick their hearts, they know, *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.* The mission to Athens to some may look unsuccessful with only a few converted, the only failure was their refusal to hear the Gospel. Some heard but said, we will hear you again on this matter, **perhaps they thought it may be true yet put it off**, saying to themselves I know I should obey Christ, but I will do it another time. **How many do this today?** Some heard and some believed, the word of God so touched their hearts they bowed their hearts and maybe even their knees they prayed realising they were sinners in need of forgiveness. they wanted their sins to be washed away; they wanted a new heart. They wanted to become a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. The leader in the council **Dionysius** was converted a man of great influence. And a woman named Damerus who we know very little about. **Lives that were changed and made new.** Sins were pardoned and they were filled with the Joy of Knowing Him. They received the gift of Eternal life.

There may be some who say I'm like that woman unknown. But even although she was unknown- Grace opened her eyes, and Grace was made known to her. She received the gift of Eternal Life. She knew not just about the Lord, she didn't only offer lip service she was given a new heart.

If you come to Him today, He will not refuse You. He will wash you sin away He will make you a new creation in Christ Jesus. Tell Him, in prayer you want to be saved. **When you get home find a quiet place** and pray ask Him to forgive all your sin ask

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Him to give you a new heart. Ask Him to make you, His child. Believe the gospel and repent of your sins and you shall be saved.