



# Rooted

IN HIS WORD



September





# CHURCH

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# Rooted In His Word: Church

## Acts 9- Paul's Conversion

September 12, 2021

### FOR THE LEADER

Have you ever had a chance encounter with someone or has a circumstance unexpectedly changed your life? Maybe you have had the opportunity to meet someone who was famous, or someone you considered a hero, like an actor/actress, a sports figure, or a politician. Did the meeting or encounter live up to your expectations? After you walked away from the opportunity, did anything in your personal life change? Did you become a different person because of the chance encounter? In today's lesson we will study the incredible meeting and subsequent change that occurred in Paul's (Paul's original name was Saul) life. On the road to Damascus, a town approximately 135 miles northeast of Jerusalem, Paul's encounter with Jesus changed the path of his life forever. As we study the lesson today, keep the main truth in mind.

**MAIN TRUTH:** The power in the shed blood of Christ covers all our sins and arms us with an extraordinary testimony.

#### TODAY'S TRUTHS:

**TRUTH #1:** Jesus closely identifies with His followers and seeks to protect them.

**TRUTH #2:** Jesus can use all sinners to bring glory to His name if they are willing to follow Him.

**TRUTH #3:** Jesus gives His followers the courage and strength they need to encounter the lost.

**TRUTH #4:** Encountering Jesus leads to a powerful testimony.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Think for a moment through all the Biblical leaders of the faith and how God used the unlikely and unusual to further the message of the Gospel. If we are all being honest, there are some surprising choices. Can you name a few of the unlikely candidates God used to spread the message of salvation?

- **Abraham** – Jewish nation rises from a family submerged in idolatry from the land of Ur
- **Jacob** – a manipulative liar who schemed to snatch the birthright away from his twin brother Esau
- **Rahab** – a harlot of Jericho who by faith hid the spies and ended up as the mother of Boaz being included in the genealogy of the Messiah
- **Gideon's band of selected warriors** – who fought the enemy with trumpets and torches – showing that God chooses to display His power through weakness
- **David** – the runt of the litter; the youngest of the children of Jesse – all of whom were paraded past Samuel and rejected with the statement: "The Lord has not chosen these" (1 Sam. 16:10) but David was revealed to be the sovereign choice of God for the kingship of the nation
- **Each of the Apostles** (fishermen, tax collectors, etc.) – not the educated or the rich.

Why do you believe God used men and women like these mentioned throughout scripture as His carriers of the Gospel message?

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Knowing God uses the Jacobs, the Rahabs, the Pauls of the world, how does that make you feel concerning your role as a believer living in South Carolina?

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What must we do to allow God the opportunity to use us in fulfilling the Great Commission?

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## YOUR VIEWPOINT

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## II. GET FOCUSED

### Read Acts 9:1-4

*But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup>and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. <sup>4</sup>And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"*

## TRUTH #1: JESUS CLOSELY IDENTIFIES WITH HIS FOLLOWERS AND SEEKS TO PROTECT THEM.

Look specifically at verse 4 again. "And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Jesus encounters Saul on the road to Damascus. Jesus in this instance in confronting a tyrant who had been capturing and killing Christians. When Jesus confronts Saul, he asks the question, "Why are you persecuting me?" Jesus did not ask, "Why are you persecuting my people, or my followers?" Jesus asked, "Why are you persecuting me?" In that moment we can see how Jesus is so closely connected and closely identifies with His followers. It is a clear message to Saul by persecuting them, he was actually persecuting Jesus.

How does it make you feel to know our Lord and Savior so closely watches and identifies with us that He defends us in tough situations?

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What do you think Saul was thinking when he heard Jesus' question?

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## YOUR VIEWPOINT

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## TRUTH #2: JESUS CAN USE ALL SINNERS TO BRING GLORY TO HIS NAME IF THEY ARE WILLING TO FOLLOW HIM.

### Read Acts 9:5-9

*And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. <sup>6</sup>But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." <sup>7</sup>The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. <sup>8</sup>Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So, they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. <sup>9</sup>And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.*

What was Saul's response to Jesus?

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On a scale from 1-10 (with 10 being terrified) how fearful do you think Saul was when he could not see even though his eyes were open?

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Fear of the unknown can be scary and even terrifying. For Saul, he was looking for people "*belonging to the way*" what he found was "*The Actual Way!*" John 14:6 says, "*Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'.*" Jesus is the only way to salvation. Saul was searching for people who were followers of Jesus to persecute them. No one could have ever imagined he would become a person "*belonging to the way.*"



Saul was a destroyer of lives, a man who despised and loathed Christians, and soon he would not only become one of them, but also a champion of the faith.

Have you ever thought or heard someone say, "Jesus can't use me, I'm a terrible person? I've done way too many bad things for God to ever use me?"

What does this passage teach us about God's forgiveness and His ability to use us to bring Him glory?

## YOUR VIEWPOINT

## TRUTH 3: JESUS GIVES HIS FOLLOWERS THE COURAGE AND STRENGTH THEY NEED TO ENCOUNTER THE LOST.

### Read Acts 9:10-19

Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." <sup>11</sup>And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, <sup>12</sup>and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." <sup>13</sup>But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." <sup>15</sup>But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. <sup>16</sup>For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." <sup>17</sup>So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." <sup>18</sup>And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; <sup>19</sup>and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus."

Have you ever thought, "That person would never accept Jesus, I know who they really are, or what they have actually done?"

Ananias was fearful. When the Lord asked him to go to Saul and lay hands on him, what was his response?

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Ananias knew Saul's history. He had heard the stories. Saul was a wicked man and what the Lord was asking Ananias to do did not sit well with him. Do you think you would have been reluctant to go knowing Saul's reputation? Why or why not?

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Have you ever been unwilling to share faith with someone because you knew their past or present behavior? Share a time you chose to share or not share faith with someone because you did not think they could change?

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## YOUR VIEWPOINT

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## TRUTH #4: ENCOUNTERING JESUS LEADS TO A POWERFUL TESTIMONY.

### Read Acts 9:20-22

*And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." <sup>21</sup>And all who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?" <sup>22</sup>But Saul increased all the more in strength and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.*

Saul's encounter with Jesus leads to an unbelievable testimony. Who Saul was changed in the blink of an eye when the bright light of Christ called to him while he was hunting Christians. The meeting left Saul with a powerful testimony of faith.

How quickly did Saul begin proclaiming Christ?

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When someone meets Jesus and becomes a follower of Christ what should they be doing from that moment going forward?

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Saul now had a testimony to share and that is what we should be doing on a regular basis. Have you ever written your personal testimony? Do you know how to write out your personal testimony? Below is a template to help you accomplish this task. Share it with your class.

A personal testimony is something you should be able to share in 3-4 minutes. It should answer the following four questions. Teachers use this time to share your personal testimony of faith.

1. My life before I met Christ: (attitudes and actions towards life in general) Answer how you felt about family, friends, interests... Where did you place your trust or self-worth? My satisfaction was sought in... My background and attitude regarding Christ were...

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2. How I realized my need for Christ: Answer what enabled you to realize your need for Jesus (people, books, meetings, circumstances) ...What you thought and/or noticed (about yourself, God and others)

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3. How I received (or met) Christ: (gospel moment – include at least one Scripture verse) I realized without Christ... I saw my greatest need or desire was... What has meant the most to me was understanding...

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4. My life since receiving Christ: (attitudes and actions) My current relationship with Jesus... My attitude toward others has changed... My desires are now... A difficult area of obedience is... I am learning that... I am excited about...

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### YOUR VIEWPOINT

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## III. CONCLUSION

**MAIN TRUTH:** The power in the shed blood of Christ covers all our sins and arms us with an extraordinary testimony.

**TODAY'S TRUTHS:**

**TRUTH #1:** Jesus closely identifies with His followers and seeks to protect them.

**TRUTH #2:** Jesus can use all sinners to bring glory to His name if they are willing to follow Him.

**TRUTH #3:** Jesus gives His followers the courage and strength they need to encounter the lost.

**TRUTH #4:** Encountering Jesus leads to a powerful testimony.

All believers have a faith testimony. Take a moment and have a couple of people from your class share a 3–4-minute testimony of how they became a believer using the template we provided. If time permits have class members share their testimonies with one another.

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## IV. EXTRA TIME

Paul was used in a powerful way to shape the landscape of Christianity as we know it today. Let us examine a few of the ways Paul shaped Christian culture and our view of Christianity:

- **Paul made numerous missionary journeys.**
- **Paul is credited with writing thirteen books of the Bible:**

Romans  
1 & 2 Corinthians  
Galatians  
Ephesians  
Philippines  
Colossians  
1 & 2 Thessalonians  
1 & 2 Timothy  
Titus  
Philemon

Can you think of other contributions Paul made to the Christian faith?

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## V. PRAYER TIME

Pray for one person you are hoping to share your testimony with this month.

## VI. MEMORY VERSE

**Acts 9:4-5**

*And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"<sup>5</sup> And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.*

# Rooted In His Word: Church

## Acts 16:16-34 - Paul & Silas

September 19, 2021

### FOR THE LEADER

How do you want to be remembered? Not necessarily after your time on earth is over, but after you meet someone for the first time, how do you want to be remembered? What do you want the people you meet to remember about you? What would you want them to say? Last week we studied the encounter Paul had on the road to Damascus and how that encounter changed his life forever. His meeting with Jesus was something he would never forget and made an eternal impact on him and many others he encountered after that day. Our lesson today focuses on several people Paul and Silas encountered before and during their time in prison. For those who encountered Paul and Silas, their lives were never the same again. Our theme and truths for today will be in the form of prayers we should pray as individuals and as a class throughout our days and weeks because the people we encounter should be different after they have been with us.

**MAIN GOAL (PRAYER):** Lord, no matter what my circumstances, lead me to always have a responsibility to the Gospel by sharing the love of Jesus.

#### TODAY'S TRUTHS (PRAYERS):

**PRAYER #1:** Lord, in the moments when I am most vulnerable, remind me of your invincible power.

**PRAYER #2:** Lord, may my daily witness lead others to find comfort and security in you.

**PRAYER #3:** Lord, may my actions and my words fulfill the Great Commission.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Before we can get into the scriptures celebrating the miraculous release of Paul and Silas from the jail in Philippi, we need to look at the journey that placed them there in the first place.

#### Read Acts 16:16-24

*As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. <sup>17</sup>She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." <sup>18</sup>And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. <sup>19</sup>But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. <sup>20</sup>And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. <sup>21</sup>They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." <sup>22</sup>The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. <sup>23</sup>And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. <sup>24</sup>Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.*



Paul and Silas are on a missionary journey. They have travelled to Derbe, Antioch, Troas, Samothrace, Neapolis and finally Philippi. They are on their way to pray when they encounter a slave girl who tells fortunes. The scriptures tell us she makes her owners a lot of money, and they also tell us how she follows Paul and Silas for several days.

Does it seem odd to you that a demon-possessed girl would go around announcing the arrival of missionaries? How would you explain her words, *"These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation?"*

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To be honest, I don't know why a demonized girl would continually follow Paul and Silas and shout, *"These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation."* What we do know is Paul becomes very annoyed by her actions and finally turns to the spirit in her and says, *"I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her."* And it came out that very hour.

How did Paul know she was demon-possessed? What did her actions say to Paul and Silas?

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Fortune-telling was forbidden in the Old Testament.

**Read Deuteronomy 18:9-14**

*"When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. <sup>10</sup>There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer <sup>11</sup>or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, <sup>12</sup>for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD. And because of these abominations the LORD your God is driving them out before you. <sup>13</sup>You shall be blameless before the LORD your God, <sup>14</sup>for these nations, which you are about to dispossess, listen to fortune-tellers and to diviners. But as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you to do this.*

What do you think was going through the slave girl's mind in that moment when she was released from the devil's hands?

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## How did her owners react?

### Read Acts 16:19-24

*But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. <sup>20</sup>And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. <sup>21</sup>They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." <sup>22</sup>The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. <sup>23</sup>And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. <sup>24</sup>Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.*

**Magistrates in Roman cities were followed by attendants who carried wooden rods to inflict corporal punishment when the magistrates felt it was needed upon citizens. Each colony typically had two magistrates.** The slave girl's owners were enraged at Paul and Silas because their "profit maker" was now gone. So, they gathered a mob and dragged the missionaries before the city magistrates on false charges. Since Philippi was governed by the Romans, Paul who was a Roman citizen was entitled to a fair trial according to Roman law. Apparently the officials gave in to the crowd's frenzy. **Where have we heard that before?** Paul and Silas were subjected to a severe flogging without any legal grounds. Even after all that, it still was not enough, because afterwards the two were imprisoned. They were kept in prison with their feet in wooden stocks.

**Take a moment and lead your class, or have a class member pray: Lord, no matter what my circumstances, lead me to always have a responsibility to the Gospel by sharing the love of Jesus.**

## YOUR VIEWPOINT

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## II. GET FOCUSED

### Read Acts 16:25-26

*About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, <sup>26</sup>and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened."*

**PRAYER #1: LORD, IN THE MOMENTS WHEN I AM MOST VULNERABLE, REMIND ME OF YOUR INVINCIBLE POWER.**

After being humiliated and flogged, Paul and Silas are imprisoned. As we mentioned, they are securely placed in the inner prison. Roman public prisons had a vestibule and outer prison and behind the outer prison was the inner prison, a dungeon-type facility with no light or air except what came through the door when open.

Paul and Silas are having a two-man prayer and praise meeting in the jail. The other inmates were listening to them as they sang praises to God. In that moment the ground shook and chains fell off.

Why did the ground shake and chains fall?

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How were Paul and Silas showing their vulnerability in the prison?

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How did God respond to their songs of praise?

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What happens when we are vulnerable, open and honest about our relationship with Jesus?

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**Take a moment and lead your class or have a class member pray: Lord, in the moments when I am most vulnerable remind me of your invincible power.**

## YOUR VIEWPOINT

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### Read Acts 16: 27-29

*When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup>But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." <sup>29</sup>And the jailer called for lights and rushed in and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas.*

## PRAYER #2: LORD, MAY MY DAILY WITNESS LEAD OTHERS TO FIND COMFORT AND SECURITY IN YOU.

**When the earth shook, the shackles fell, and the doors opened. The jailer woke up and saw the prison doors open and was going to take his own life. It is remarkable to think Paul and Silas did not view this as an opportunity for freedom, they viewed it as an opportunity to witness.**

Why was the jailer going to kill himself?

In Rome during this time-period, if a prisoner escaped or was lost, whoever was responsible for the prisoner would pay the price with his life. Like a lot of people today, this jailer had come to identify his life with his job. In 2021, there are people all over the world and even in this room who can only identify themselves by what they do, the job they have and perhaps the jailer was no different. When the jailer rushes in and realizes he might be about to lose what was entrusted to him, it is not out of the question to see why he would be willing to take his own life. In that moment however, Paul shows him a better identity, a more satisfying reality, and a greater responsibility that surpasses everything the jailer had previously known.

How did the other prisoners react when they encountered Paul and Silas?

What did the jailer do when he realized they were all still inside the jail?

What happens when believers fully recognize there is a better identity in Christ, a more satisfying reality in Christ, and a greater responsibility given by Christ?

**Take a moment and lead your class or have a class member pray: Lord, may I find my true identity in you and may my daily witness lead others to find comfort and security through you.**

## MY VIEWPOINT

### Read Acts 16:30-34

*Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" <sup>31</sup>And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." <sup>32</sup>And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. <sup>33</sup>And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. <sup>34</sup>Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.*



One of the most powerful questions ever asked in scripture can be found in verse 30.

*"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"* Witnessing would probably be easier for some people if unbelievers would just ask what it means to be saved. It would make fulfilling the Great Commission easier in a lot of ways. However, keep in mind what the jailer had seen and experienced that led him to ask Paul and Silas his question. When the ground shook, the doors opened, and bonds fell off the hands and wrists, they stayed. He saw something in them that was different.

## PRAYER #3: LORD, MAY MY ACTIONS AND MY WORDS FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION.

Do you believe actions speak louder than words? Why or why not?

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What happens to our witness when our actions do not match our words?

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Take a moment and lead your class or have a class member pray: Lord, may my actions and my words fulfill the Great Commission.

How does the jailer respond now that he has encountered Paul and Silas?

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### YOUR VIEWPOINT

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## III. CONCLUSION

### Read Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[b] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

How are you living your life to fulfill the Great Commission?

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What steps can we take as a class or as individuals to fulfill the Great Commission?

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**MAIN GOAL (PRAYER):** Lord, no matter what my circumstances, lead me to always have a responsibility to the Gospel by sharing the love of Jesus.

**TODAY'S TRUTHS (PRAYERS):**

**PRAYER #1:** Lord, in the moments when I am most vulnerable, remind me of your invincible power.

**PRAYER #2:** Lord, may my daily witness lead others to find comfort and security in you.

**PRAYER #3:** Lord, may my actions and my words fulfill the Great Commission.

## IV. EXTRA TIME

**Read Acts 16:35-40**

*But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." <sup>36</sup>And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore, come out now and go in peace." <sup>37</sup>But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out." <sup>38</sup>The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. <sup>39</sup>So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. <sup>40</sup>So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.*

Why was it important to Paul for the magistrates to come to them?

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## V. PRAYER TIME

Pray for a divine encounter with a lost person this week. Pray for the Lord to grant you a Paul and Silas moment.

## VI. MEMORY VERSE

**Acts 16:31**

*And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

# Rooted In His Word: Church

## Acts 17:16-28 - "The Church & Culture"

September 26, 2021

### FOR THE LEADER

One of the great apologists of recent times, C. S. Lewis, had this to say about defending the faith: "One of the great difficulties is to keep before the audience's mind the question of truth. One must keep on pointing out that Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. They are simply not interested in the question of truth or falsehood. They only want to know if it will be comforting, or 'inspiring,' or socially useful."

What would you do if God called you to go to Harvard or Yale and share with the philosophy department on why Christianity is the only religion that matters? What would you do? How would you feel? How would you react to their questions? Consider this is exactly what is happening in our scripture today, as Paul is in Athens waiting for Silas and Timothy to arrive. Paul is commissioned by God to give the reason for the Christian faith to the thinkers and philosophers of Rome. Athens during this time was known as the intellectual center of the world, and because of this, what Paul does is remarkable and amazing as he shares with the brightest minds of that day, who the Lord really is.

**MAIN TRUTH:** *The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in Temples made by man. Acts 17:24*

Name some of the places you have experienced God in a real way, away from the church-house. What circumstances created an opportunity for the spirit of God to come and engage with you in a setting away from the church?

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As we study our lesson today, keep in mind the main truth that comes directly from scripture in Acts 17:24 and think on the following facts as it relates to our scripture.

### TODAY'S TRUTHS:

- TRUTH #1:** When our human spirit is closely connected to the Holy Spirit, God empowers us to defend the faith.
- TRUTH #2:** When our human spirit is provoked by the Holy Spirit, we will have no choice but to share the Gospel message.
- TRUTH #3:** When our human spirit gives way to the Holy Spirit, we will speak truth for all to hear.

# I. INTRODUCTION

## Read Acts 17:16-21

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. <sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" <sup>20</sup>For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." <sup>21</sup>Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

## TRUTH #1: WHEN OUR HUMAN SPIRIT IS CLOSELY CONNECTED TO THE HOLY SPIRIT, GOD EMPOWERS US TO DEFEND THE FAITH.

Athens was a city filled with art and statues of the Greek gods. The architecture, the stadiums, all of it was a beautiful sight to see. Yet what most people saw as beautiful, Paul knew was a city filled with idolatry.

Why did Paul feel the need to defend the faith?

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Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt like you needed to defend the faith? What happened?

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What idols in American culture cause us to defend the faith today?

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## YOUR VIEWPOINT

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## II. GET FOCUSED

**TRUTH #2: WHEN OUR HUMAN SPIRIT IS PROMPTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, WE WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO SHARE THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS.**

### Read Acts 17:16-17

*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. <sup>17</sup>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.*

Paul is saying his Spirit was provoked or stirred because of the idols in the city and he could sense real lostness all around him. He recognized the city and the people were away from God and the idols positioned throughout the area confirmed it. Years ago, I, (Mark Owens) journeyed on a mission trip to Chepen, Peru. It was our first day on the field and we arrived at a local school to provide a medical clinic for the people who lived nearby. Stepping out of the van I could sense real despair and a real sense of lostness. The city felt dark and hopeless. The Lord placed a burden on my heart that day for the people of that city. When the clinic ended, over 100 people had come to faith in Jesus. I have returned to Chepen six times over the years and have had the privilege of baptizing many people in a local watering hole there.

Did you know LBC has a church plant in Chepen, Peru and our planters are reaching people with the gospel of Jesus Christ? Even now as we gather, believers in Chepen will be gathering for worship in the name of Jesus. Would you take a moment and pray for our church planters Ronald Quispe and Margia Sandoval? Would you pray for the people of Chepen and for the message of salvation to penetrate the lives and hearts of the people?

Have you ever felt desperate for an individual or group of people who were without Jesus? If so, when?

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How can we see Paul's desperation for the people in the verses we read? What caused him to realize Athens was lost?

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How is Athens' culture from our scripture different from our current culture in the midlands of South Carolina?

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How is our culture in Lexington similar to the culture of Athens?

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An idol is anything we hold in higher esteem than God. Idols can even be things that are very good but put in the wrong place of importance (ie: money, vacation, sports, comfort, even church buildings and traditions). We often think of idols as being an issue in other countries but every culture is prone to idols because we are sinful people. The idols we see in America and Lexington are often more subtle, but hold just as much power over the one who worships that idol.

What subtle idols do you see in Lexington?

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## YOUR VIEWPOINT

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### Read Acts 17:22-28

*So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup>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. <sup>24</sup>The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, <sup>25</sup>nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. <sup>26</sup>And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, <sup>27</sup>that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, <sup>28</sup>for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring'".*

Areopagus is the Latin form of the Greek word rendered "Mars Hill." It denotes the council or court of justice which met in the open air on the hill. The established body was a group who dealt with civil and religious life in Athens. It was known as the ancient seat of the court. This court held and exercised the right of capital punishment. The Areopagus made sure the laws were enforced, observed, and executed by the established authorities. They had the power to bring officials to trial for their actions and raise objections to all resolutions of the Council and of the General Assembly. The Areopagus also protected the worship of the gods, the sanctuaries, sacred festivals, and the olive trees of Athens. In addition, it supervised the religious opinions of the people, the moral conduct of the citizens, as well as the education of the youth. Even with this backing, Paul's teaching would have appealed to the philosophers because it was rooted in Old Testament teachings. They may not have liked what he was saying but many would have listened because of the authority he was speaking from.

## TRUTH #3: WHEN OUR HUMAN SPIRIT GIVES WAY TO THE HOLY SPIRIT, WE SPEAK TRUTH THAT HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE THE WORLD.

### Read Acts 17:22-25 again

*So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup>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. <sup>24</sup>The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, <sup>25</sup>nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.*

How does Paul appeal to their intellect and what he has perceived by walking the streets of Athens?

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When Paul speaks to them about the inscription on the alter which read, "To the unknown god," what message do you think he was trying to convey?

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How did he transition to the one true God?

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Paul makes it clear there is ONE true God, and He is the creator of the world. Often when sharing faith with people from other religions it is imperative to use the term, "One true God." The reason is similar to what Paul is facing in Athens. The people serve or consider many gods to be authentic and real when truth be told, there is only one God and He created the universe and everything in it.

How can we use this teaching by Paul in our witnessing encounters today?

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### YOUR VIEWPOINT

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### III. CONCLUSION

**MAIN TRUTH:** *The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in Temples made by man. Acts 17:24*

**TODAY'S TRUTHS:**

**TRUTH #1:** When our human spirit is closely connected to the Holy Spirit, God empowers us to defend the faith.

**TRUTH #2:** When our human spirit is provoked by the Holy Spirit, we will have no choice but to share the Gospel message.

**TRUTH #3:** When our human spirit gives way to the Holy Spirit, we will speak truth for all to hear.

**Read Acts 17: 22-25 Again**

*So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup>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. <sup>24</sup>The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, <sup>25</sup>nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.*

What is the message Paul is relaying to the philosophers in Athens?

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What do verses 24 & 25 mean to you and how do they help you in your faith walk?

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Explain how you can use these two verses to witness to the lost in Lexington, the US, and around the world?

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**Read Proverbs 4:23-27**

*Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. <sup>24</sup>Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. <sup>25</sup>Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. <sup>26</sup>Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. <sup>27</sup>Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.*



This passage in Proverbs gives us a pattern to keep us on the right path in a culture that is pagan and full of Idols. The proverb shows us that we should pay close attention to what we say, what we see, and where we go. Paul was not afraid to go to spiritually dark places but his motivation for going was always to shine the light of Christ.

How do you think these three things impact your walk with Jesus and your witness in Lexington?

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How can you shine the light of the gospel this week?

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## IV. EXTRA TIME

Have your class members write a note of encouragement to our church planters in Chepen, Peru.

## V. MEMORY VERSE

### Acts 1:8

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

## This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

