

TRUTH, SINCERITY, & WISDOM

Joe Slater

Paul had his work cut out for him in Athens. Idolatry and human philosophy dominated the scene. As he viewed the city packed with statues, busts, temples, and altars, Paul's *"spirit was provoked within him"* (Acts 17:16). He couldn't stand it! He had to tell them about Jesus!

His preaching in the marketplace netted him a hearing before the Court of Aereopagus (Mars Hill) to explain his teaching. If the judges disapproved, they could force Paul to leave.

Paul acknowledged that the Athenians were *"very religious,"* as evidenced by the innumerable *"objects of your worship"* (17:22, 23). Yet he proceeded to tell them that they did not know the true God, and that their idolatry was all wrong!

Feature what may have gone through the minds of the good citizens of Athens as they listened: "Who does this Paul think he is? We have more gods here in Athens than he can count, but he's saying they're ALL wrong? Some nerve! He probably thinks he and his little bunch are the only ones who are right. Well, we're just as sincere as he is! Besides, he shouldn't be telling us we lack knowledge (17:23). How insulting! Hasn't he heard of all of our famous philosophers? People come from all over to study here. Does Paul think he knows more than all these highly-educated dignitaries?"

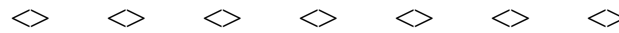
Who knows whether the Athenians thought or said any of those things? But notice the similarity between those objections and the ones commonly offered today when folks are confronted with the gospel. We probably have fewer denominations today than Athens had gods back then; but people still become upset and offended when told that God never intended for there to be even

one denomination. Most people today still accept the idea of one God; but they may very well balk at the concept of one body (church), though the same passage teaches both (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Are there sincere people in various religions today? Of course! Undoubtedly there were many sincere worshipers of the various Greek gods in Athens; but that didn't stop Paul from explaining that the true God is not a stone, metal, or wooden image.

Are there highly-educated, brilliant people in various religions today? Certainly! But never equate the world's wisdom with that which comes from God through His word (1 Corinthians 12:6-8).

At the risk of offending people, let us clearly but kindly point out the difference between truth and error, just as Paul did. Faithfulness to Christ demands nothing less!



Believe in God and Believe God!

"Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God" (James 2:23).

There is a big difference between believing in God and believing God. Abraham did both. God gave him the gift of righteousness, and they were friends.

Imagine a human being a friend of the Almighty. Imagine no more, because Jesus has made it a reality for all of us. We have a friend in Jesus, and that connects us to His Father when we keep His commands. He told us that in John 15. Now, with Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we all can be called a friend of God. Believe in God and believe Him.

--Ron Bartanen (via Bulletin Gold)

Go Christian!

"I press on toward the goal unto the prize or the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12).

"Everywhere we go, people want to know, who we are, so we tell 'em. We are the Dragons, the mighty, mighty Dragons!" The high school gym bleachers break out in a wave of gold and blue banners, and the students roar their approval as our football team, led by the team captain, runs onto the gym floor. We are having a high school pep rally, and we are behind our team one hundred percent.

Today I am a member of a different team with a heavenly calling. Our Captain sits in heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in the world to come. All things are in subjection to Him.

Our team's light shines before men so that they will see and glorify our Father. We want to glorify God because He has redeemed us. He has bought us and given us forgiveness of our sins through His blood according to the riches of His grace. He gives us every spiritual blessing and everything we need to do His will.

Team members may fumble occasionally, but they will never lose if they keep their eyes on their Captain (Hebrews 12:1, 2). He gives us the strength to keep trying and to overcome all obstacles. He is always at our side, watching and guiding our steps. We have victory through His love.

Our team will win. It is our Captain's promise, and He never lies. He said, "I go to prepare a place for you." It is an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and it doesn't fade away. Eye has not seen nor ear heard the things that await us. We have a winning team through Christ our Lord. It is something to shout and cheer about.

--Donna Richmond Wittlif (Denver, CO)