



Gospel Impact – Part 3 **When It Intrigues Our Mind** **Pastor Mike Fabarez**

I hope that you are well as in not sick. I know a lot of people are. I asked a guy last week who came on Saturday night why he was there by himself. He said, "There's sickness in my house." I thought, well, what you mean is there are sick people at your house. And you may say, "Well, that's not an obvious distinction. You're just being too nit-picky." But if you were to have said that in the Old Testament, say, to a Levitical priest, "there's sickness in my house," you would immediately think of Leviticus 14 and he might step into action.

Because in Leviticus 14 it says if someone says to a priest there is sickness in my house, the priests need to go out to that house, they need to inspect it. There's a whole list of criteria in the inspection and they need to label the house uninhabitable for seven days. They come back seven days later and inspect it again. And if there's no improvement they need to start directing the homeowner to scrape the plaster off all the walls. They need to remove any stones that are affected by what they consider to be sickness in the house. And then they go back for another inspection later. And if it persists, they actually have to direct the homeowner in Israel to dismantle his house and take it out of the city and into what is called an unclean place and dump all the building materials.

So you don't want to say there's sickness in my house if you mean there are sick people in it, at least in the Old Testament. And that's not some weird, you know, exorcism or mystical thing. You know, this is not some incantation. This is very practical. And if you say what's this all about, all you need to ask is a like mold remediation company. They will tell you all about it. There is sickness in the house. The New York Times, I read an article about a building that was labeled in the article as a "sick building." And they didn't mean it was a sick building, like really cool. They meant it's a sick building in that this building is making everyone sick. And of course, because there are forms of fungi and mold and mildew in the house that was making everybody in the building sick, and they had to make the building and say it's uninhabitable.

And all this I got into my mind between Sundays in reading an article from The Seattle Times, which of course, they have this problem more frequently up there where the homes do have splotches and spots here and there and, you know, baseboards and in ceilings and on the walls. And they're trying to help you make a distinction between, you know, something that might just be some normal mildew that's not dangerous, it's innocuous, all the way to, you know, the black mold that can really be devastating to your family's health. So you need to be able to sort those things out.

And if I said to you it's been sorted out in your home, you have a black mold problem and it's serious and it's infected your home. If I could tell you that definitively, now what would you do? You'd probably say, "Pastor Mike, I would do what... I'd call one of those companies you just talked about, a mold remediation company. I would get somebody on it and we would get it fixed." And if I said, "Well, you can't do that, it's not possible." Well, then you'd say, "Well, I guess I'm going to have to sell my house and get out of it. I got to get a new house?" If I said,



"Nope, you can't do that. You have to live in that house for the rest of your life." You wouldn't like this conversation, I understand.

But if I were to say that and mean it and have some way to enforce that, you'd say, "Well, that would make for some... I'd have to live very differently in that house. I would need, you know, gas masks, I'd need oxygen, I'd need things to protect my family because, you know, the house is sick." Well, I'm here this morning to preach to you about the realities of your sick house. And I don't mean the four walls here that you might inhabit in South County. I'm talking about the sickness of our much larger house that we live in, that we might call, that people call, our culture, our society, the way in which the place in which we live, the community in which we live at large, its values, its ways of thinking, the way it views reality. It is rightly determined in this illustration as a sick society that unfortunately where you too indiscriminately breathe it in, it's definitely going to cause some serious problems to your spiritual lungs and your spiritual life. Your spiritual health is going to be infected by this environment in which we live.

If you were to look through Church history at a word that kind of describes the problem, you might find Church theologians and historians calling it the problem of living in Athens. They call it that because of the passage that we've reached in Acts Chapter 17, where Paul finds himself after he got out, you remember, of Thessalonica and Berea, and he had to get on a ship and make his way down to Athens. And when he's there, the way it's described as Luke takes what he saw there and puts it in print for us in Acts Chapter 17 verses 16 through 21, it's become this heading, the nomenclature for what it means to live in a society that is hostile to biblical thinking.

And we might call it a secular society. We live as Christians in a secular society. And the problem is you can't relax if you know that you're living in a house that's got black mold on the walls. You're going to be very careful about your breathing and you need to be very careful about the things that you have to have in your life to keep you from disease. And so I want us to look at this text and try and understand from the really opening description of Paul's time in Athens to make sure that we can sort some of these things out in our own minds and protect ourselves from the kinds of things that would cause spiritual damage to our lives.

So take your Bibles and turn to this passage with me. Acts Chapter 17 beginning in verse 16. And I'll tell you, if I were, you know, given to rush through passages of the Bible in my preaching, I guarantee you we would just quickly glance over these verses and get down to verse 22 where the good stuff starts. The good stuff starts there, where Paul is going to talk about and address the biblical truths that people need to hear. And that would be a great sermon. But sadly, you're not here today for a great sermon. You're here for the preliminary section because I'm not given to rush through passages normally and we need to stop and see what we can learn from this section of Scripture.

It's an interesting section of Scripture. Part of it you would say, well, it seems redundant because in verse 17, as you glance at that, you say, "Well, that's what we had in Thessalonica, that's what we had in Berea." And so Paul is going to go into the synagogue



and he's going to talk about Christ again. And a lot of it we have to fill in from the pattern and we know he's taking Scripture and showing the fulfillment of Christ. And so, yeah, okay, we've kind of covered all of that. And so we have.

But we've got to look at the setting of what's going on in Athens and start to do what I think a lot of people have done throughout history to try and see if we can extract from what was going on in Athens that was hostile to biblical thinking and say let's just make sure we can identify that in our culture today as detached as it may be, even though it's always going to have common themes of the way human beings think. But try and at least establish the things that we might have to be careful of. That we need to be discerning. That we need to filter out.

The reason we need to put some oxygen over our nose and mouth and breathe in the good stuff is because we're going to have to hold our breath through a lot of the things that we deal with in society. So let me read this for you with minimal comment, as minimal as we can make it. Let's try. Acts Chapter 17 verses 16 through 21. "Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens." You've got a map there. See the map? It's a long way from where they were. It's at the bottom of your worksheet. "He's waiting for them," he's waiting for the rest of his missionary team, which we've become familiar with since they left on this second missionary journey.

"His spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols." Let's start with the word "provoked" there, that word, to try and give it some, you know, some substance, some depth, some dimension. It's a word that's only used one other time in the New Testament, and it's a passage you're very familiar with. And it might have been printed on your napkin at the reception of your wedding. It's from the love passage in First Corinthians 13, which is not perhaps the best showcase for this passage of wedding, because it's really not about romantic love, but it's about love. And it says one thing about love, something that it's not. It says love is not irritable. That word "irritable," same word here, only twice in the New Testament. And here's the other one. He was irritated, provoked in his spirit. You might say provoked for what? To do what? Provoked to be frustrated and angry. He was angry because the city was full of idols.

Now, here's the problem with even me reading that phrase for you. If I said what do you think of when you think about Athens, first century and idols, you can kind of picture some things you might have seen. Maybe, you know, read a little bit. You've watched a biography about anything. Oh, yeah, like the Parthenon and like, you know, this temple too, you know, Zeus and you've got all these different gods. And I'm picturing, like, maybe statues and maybe they're gilded and there are, you know, priests walking around and some cultic rituals. And so you're envisioning something that if I were to say, try and think about the modern age now, you think, "Oh, well, we don't do that anymore." And again, that's one of the problems of reading this at arm's distance and saying Paul was in this real weird pagan, you know, idol-worshiping culture and a lot of that in the Old Testament. Now we see it in the New Testament, and I'm glad we're way past that now. You don't think I'll let you get away with that thought, though, right?

Verse 17. So, now this is interesting. We think he's going to do this anyway. This is what he normally does, but he seems to base his reasoning in the synagogues on that. And there's an "and" that's coming here in the middle of the verse. So we know he's not only doing that, but he's doing more than that because he's provoked, he's irritated, he's indignant over what he's seeing, because the things do not comport with biblical Christianity. "His spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue," verse 17, "with the Jews and the devout persons," those God-fearing Greeks who often went to the synagogue.

So he went ahead and maybe even ahead of schedule. He's there for some time waiting for his missionary team to get there. So he's got to have a place to stay and he's going to the marketplace to get food. And he's figuring out maybe selling some tents there or whatever he's doing. But he's like prompted to get into the synagogue to preach, even though his associates aren't there. And not only that, but spilling over out of the synagogue, "he's in the marketplace," in the agora, "every day with those who happened to be there." Doing what? Reasoning with them, reasoning we know as we've seen in Thessalonica and Berea, from the Scriptures, reasoning about the fulfillment of the prophecies of Jesus, reasoning about the resurrection of Christ from the dead. All those things, he's reasoning in the synagogue and he's reasoning in the marketplace.

Verse 18, "Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, 'What does this babbler wish to say?' Others said, 'This seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities.'" Why? "Because he's preaching Jesus," this guy from Nazareth who walked around Jerusalem and Galilee, "and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus." The Areopagus. "Pagos" in Greek is "the hill" or the mount and "Ares" you might know him as Mars or the God Mars or Ares, the temple to Ares. This is what is called, it's not in our Bibles here translated this way, but Mars Hill. You've heard of that, right? If you've been around the block in Christianity you've heard of Mars Hill, talk about Mars Hill.

The Areopagus here is describing a group of people. Mars Hill describes a place, and way back in the day, I mean, hundreds of years before this, you had a group called the Areopagus that was administrating and leading the municipality of Athens. And this is kind of a vestige of that which had shifted from the political power of a group of people to really intellectual power. In other words, just think of your successive world powers. You know, if I said snapshot, biblical Christian in New Testament times, who is in charge? Rome. Rome is in charge. And we've seen that. Philippi or we're talking about Thessalonica. We're talking about important Roman cities. We talk about free cities. We talk about places where the Romans had their Imperial Guards or whatever. Well, so Rome is in power.

Before that was Greece. Right? The Hellenization of the world. You've got Alexander the Great, all the things that make us think about the Grecian Empire. Well, that's in decline. The political power of Greece is yesterday. But what is continuing on in Athens, with Athens, Greece, the middle of this ancient civilization is the intellectual prowess of the culture. This is, you know, it's like thinking about Cambridge or Oxford or Harvard or Yale. These are places like they're known for their intellectual contribution to the world. So the Areopagus here is a



group of people who are, you know, if you've got some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in the marketplace hearing Paul talk, they're going to take him to like the big guns. Let's go talk to the professorial group that hears things and sorts them out and figures them out.

"So they bring him to the Areopagus," describing a group of people and they were saying what? "May we know what this new teaching is that you're presenting?" We haven't heard this. This isn't in our textbooks. We don't lecture on this. What is this about? "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." So explain yourself. Now, in the old days, you might think if you had imperial-like leaders of Athens, that this might be some kind of trial. And if you picture it that way, I would think that's not what's going on here. It's not like Paul or Peter being brought before the Sanhedrin who have gavels in their hands, so to speak, and they're going to adjudicate whether or not he's going to go to prison or not.

This is more of you're bringing stuff that we don't know. You're saying it sort of authoritatively. You're talking about Jewish Scripture and fulfillment. Listen, in life and the imperative upon us to repent and follow him, you need to come and talk to the big professorial types here and we're going to hear you out and figure this thing out. Some might even historians say, well, this is a pretrial to some kind of what are they going to make of these guys? And is there going to be some kind of civil response? Well, we've seen that in other towns. But for now, let's just see what we know and that is that they are going to kind of sort through his teaching. What do you mean by this? We need to make a definitive conclusion about your worldview here.

Now, Luke adds something interesting in verse 21, and it's not new to Luke. Luke, you know, is not the first to acknowledge this, this was well known. Historians talk about this. If you read the Peloponnesian War, which probably didn't read this week, but the old historians in Greece use to say this about Athens in one way or another. But Luke adds it just for his readers to make sure they understand the kind of the culture of this intellectual hub where everyone sat around and kind of debated things. He says this, "Now all the Athenians," verse 21, "and the foreigners who lived there." They came here for this. This was the intellectual center of ancient society. "They would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new." What's the latest? What's the greatest? What's the next thing? Very progressive these people here in Athens.

All right. That wasn't too much comment, was it? A little bit. I know you think you could have read it faster. I get that. But we got a sense of this now. All right. I broke this in half, verses 16 and 17. That's not equal halves but, and verses 18 through 21. Verses 16 and 17. Now, this is a... verse 17 I've already said, this is a statement that we've heard repeated. Wherever Paul goes, he's going to get to the synagogue. He's going to preach Christ. Look what precedes it. And even that word, "So," this Greek word is a pretty strong word. Like, "because of this, he did that." Now he's going to do this anyway. But he's provoked and irritated at what he sees and he's going to now go into the synagogues and into the marketplace and he's going to reason with them about Christ.



That paradigm is an important one and it's one that we need. And so we'll look at that in a minute. But let's just establish this word that I kind of blew past, even though I try to get you to picture it, is the word "idols." I said we like to keep this at arm's distance. We don't have idols. But, you know, you've been in church long enough to know, if I said, are we prone to idolatry, you'd say, "Yeah, human beings are prone to idolatry." And I hope you'd know you don't need a temple or some shiny object to bow down to to say that we've got idolatry going on.

Did you read the Daily Bible Reading segment this morning, the DBR? We got to read Exodus 20 afresh, which starts with God, the first written communication from God, and I mean that even though it's in Exodus 20, right? Moses had yet to be used by God to write Genesis. So here's the first thing in writing that comes from God, and here it is. "You shall have no other God before me." You shall have no other God before me. This is the supremacy of God. As Martin Luther said in his larger catechism, the concept of idolatry is simply having us put our trust or to fear or to revere something that is in some way supplanting or outweighing in our minds God. Let the draw, the passion, the focus, the concern about him. That has to be first. Anything else that might supplant that, the passion that we have for God, the high elevated view we have for God, if anything gets above that, that would be defined as idolatry.

And you probably don't feel that driving through the streets of Mission Viejo or Irvine or whatever. You might feel it when you go down, you know, drive through Las Vegas, right? You might say, "Oh, I feel it here." But you understand, the expressions, these tactile expressions of the things that our society values, they do reflect the worldview, the passions, the concerns, the priorities. And we start to think, okay, I get it. It doesn't have to be an idol where someone lays some food or brings a basket of sacrifice to them. There are many people who have given their lives to pursue this, that or the other. And those are things that are far outweighing any concern for the God who made them. And so there is idolatry taking place.

You sit here, though, most of you, I would assume, with some kind of confessional commitment to say, "I am a follower of Jesus Christ. Therefore, I dealt with that issue a long time ago. Two years ago, ten years ago, 25 years ago, I became a Christian, so for me, it's only God. I'm all about God. I'm all about that whole Exodus 20. No other God before God. I'm about God, the Triune God of the Bible." So you're not prone to idolatry. You understand in Scripture, God's people are always addressed as being prone to idolatry.

The last verse of First John, the little letter, First John ends this way. 5:21 It says this in First John 5:21, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." How do you feel about that verse? Are you insulted by that verse? "No, I've heard it before." Okay. Let's focus on a few words within this verse. "Little children." These are grown people who John is preaching to, the Apostle John. "Little children." I think that would offend you probably, if that's the way I addressed all of you. "Little children, get your Bibles out this morning. Little children, turn with me to Acts Chapter 17. Hey, little children, I got some things to warn you about." Little children. It's like, stop, stop. Who do you think you are? Stop.



Little children is a diminutive, right? Children is diminutive enough. You're a child. Little children. You're just a dumb little child. Right? "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." The whole book is... We're all Christians, man. You're preaching to Christians. We're on the same team. We don't believe in idolatry. Right? The problem with little children is they're not very discerning. As a matter of fact, if you have little children or grandchildren and they're over at your house in the kitchen, and I don't know why we do this, but we always put the poisonous stuff under the sink, the cabinet under the sink. I don't know why it's not somewhere else in the house, but is always there under the sink. That's where all the stuff that can kill you is. And so what you do is you're concerned about that, so you put all these gadgets on it to make sure that your toddler can't kind of toddle up, open it up and start, you know, eating things, snorting the comet and, you know, eating the pods for the dishwasher and, you know, drinking the Palmolive or whatever. Do they still make that stuff? I'm not spending much time in the kitchen, as you can tell.

The point is this. Right? I do not come home from work and I'm concerned that my wife's going to be eating the dishwasher pods. Do you know why? She's not a little child. I am concerned if my grandchildren happen to be there, that perhaps they might pop one of those. Why? Because "it's blue and it's green and it's shiny and round," and they eat everything. Why? Because they're just dumb little children. They'll eat anything. They'll put anything in their mouths. Little children. Now, are you starting to get more offended if you start getting addressed as "little children," keep yourself from putting dumb things in your mouth, right? Little children. You're so prone, Christian, to go and adopt views about things that are idolatrous. Okay.

Parenthetically, let me put this thought in. I know he's easy to read now because he's dead and I don't know him, but we can pull the book off the shelf by guys like A.W. Tozer, that pastor from Chicago, and we can read what he says. And it's very biting and it's very firm and authoritative. Some people say he had a prophetic voice and they don't mean that he's telling forth new revelation or telling the future, but that he speaks like so, like, powerfully. Well, I don't know. His church wasn't as big as you might think because he did speak like to little children. Right? Keep yourself from idols. He was always talking about our prone nature as Christians to mess this thing up.

He wrote a little book that if you've read any Tozer, you probably started with *The Knowledge of the Holy*. And *The Knowledge of the Holy* starts out with this sentence, right? It says, "Whatever comes to your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you." Have you heard that line before? Smile if you heard that line from *The Knowledge of the Holy*. You say, "Oh, wow that's important. I should think rightly about God." He goes on to say, right in the first chapter, this sentence. Listen carefully. "Wrong ideas about God are not only the fountain from which the polluted waters of idolatry flow, they are themselves idolatrous." Do you follow that?

So if I don't think like I should about who God is, which might happen, I don't know. I'm not a perfect Christian, right? That's not only where you become idolatrous regarding other things, those thoughts themselves are idolatrous. He goes on to say, "the idolaters," now thanks, you



just insulted me now, "the idolaters simply imagine things about God and act as if they are true." So you're really not serving and following him and believing in the real God. You're believing in what you think God is. But your view of God is over there when God is really here.

One of the reasons, one of the outsets of me sitting down saying, "Well, okay, what is Compass Bible Church? What should it be?" One of the things we said is one of our values is we're always working to maintain a high view of God. Because if you ever think you kind of got God figured out, which is the whole case that Tozer's trying to make, you've missed the point. Right? God is so beyond and so transcendent and so big that we need to continually say, I got to keep a high view of God because my tendency is to be like a little children and stick any aspect about God into my mouth just because I think it seems to taste good and seems good, it seems right to me.

So I ought to be careful because the thought itself, even though I'm calling myself a Christian and I say I'm worshiping God, I'm thinking about God this way, when really I should be thinking about God instead like this. So I need to continue to keep my mind moving toward the most exalted view of God I can have. Now, here's the paradigm of the passage. Idolatry in culture, he goes into the synagogue and he starts preaching and reasoning from the Scriptures with them about Jesus and the resurrection and going to the marketplace and doing the same. Now in the marketplace. I can only imagine he's dealing with the problem of idolatry in all the temples in the town. But in the synagogue, there's no way he's not dealing with the same thing. It's only on a different level. It's because it's not that you're the mold on the walls of culture, but you're breathing in the mold on the walls of culture. And if your view of God is now somehow being transmuted into something less than, you are becoming idolatrous.

You need to think rightly about the God of the Old Testament and now think about those prophecies. Think about the fulfillment in Christ and on we go to Christian theology. So what we have to do is to recognize our tendency living in a polluted house, our culture, secular society, that we as Christians can think in secular ways about the God that we say we serve and become idolaters in the process because we're thinking about God wrongly.

So what's the solution? Reasoning from the Scripture, reasoning about Christ. And again, that filling in the view of what it means to come into those synagogue discussions is provided for me in the pattern throughout the second missionary journey. I know what he's doing. He's opening the scrolls and he's speaking from Scripture. I know I quote this all the time, but Psalm 50. Right in the middle of that psalm talking about people who have lost their right view of God, to use Tozer's statement. Right? They're imbibing on the polluted stream of thinking wrongly about God. Therefore they become idolaters. God says this in the middle of it all. That people think that I, God says, am all together like you. In other words, you're forecasting your view of me from your own thoughts. You've imagined me to be like you.

And so the correction for that, it's one of the reasons I picked as our theme verse for this church, Psalm 43:3. That's the idea of me knowing that I'm going to have to have something external that God himself is disclosing about himself to bring us to him. Right? "Send forth



your light and your truth; let them guide me to your holy hill." Then I can have fellowship with God. But I need something outside of me to correct my thinking because I need God to self-disclose. It's called the Scriptures, Compass BIBLE Church. I need that to be the compass to bring me to a right understanding of God. I can't just ponder God. I can't speculate about God because my speculation means nothing.

One passage on this before we leave. I didn't give you the point. Number one, you need to admit it. I need to admit it. We all need to admit it. Tozer needs to admit it. Every Christian needs to admit it, our culture already is doing it wholeheartedly. Number one, we need to know that "We Tend to Think Wrongly About God." That's just the way we think. We're just naturally going to somehow try to think God is like us, in some way or another. "I'm sure that he's going to think like I do. I'm sure he's going to value what I value." And we might do a little bit of negotiation in that thinking, but eventually we start to take God off his high and exalted transcendent throne and bring him into a place where he really is kind of more in line with the way I think God should be.

In that passage, by the way, in Psalm 50, it's because God doesn't immediately get off his throne, come down, knock us upside the head and correct our thinking. Right? He's not zapping us for thinking wrongly about him, but he is pointing us to something he continually reminds us, this is where you get information about me. One passage, Isaiah 55. Go there with me, please. Isaiah Chapter 55. Let me read a passage that I know that you know, and you've read it several times and you just haven't let it soak in unless when I said Isaiah 55, you immediately got offended. Because this passage offends, it's offensive. This is fun, isn't it? It's an offensive passage.

Here it comes. You think it's sweet, you think it's cool, but really listen to it. It's like "little children, keep yourself from idols." I didn't mess that passage up for you until this morning. Now, look at this passage. Look at Isaiah Chapter 55 verse 8. Have you read this before? I'm sure you have. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord." Let's just stop right there. What in the world did he just say? He said exactly what I said by taking Psalm 50 and Psalm 43 and putting those together. The idea is simply this: that what God thinks about whatever it might be is not what I would tend to naturally think. It's just not. It's not.

Now, I've heard this line from my parents when I was growing up. They're just reminding me, you don't think right. You think wrong. The way I'm thinking about it is not the way you... The way I thought you would do your chores is not the way you thought you should do your chores. Just completely different. Now, that's already a humbling statement and a corrective for me to hear. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways are not your ways." But then he really leans into the hard slap in the face with the next line. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Can you imagine it's one thing to have a dad say to you, "you know what, that's not the way I would ever think to make my bed. The way you just did it, my thoughts are not your thoughts my way..." But then you say, "You want to know, kid, how far beneath your thoughts are from



mine? It's like, think about, like, the ground and like, outer space. That's how low your thoughts are compared to my thoughts about everything you're thinking." That would be like, wow, your dad's a jerk, right? That's terrible. I mean, you wouldn't even expect that. We know something of that saying, "I'm mature. You're not. I would not eat a dishwasher pod just because it's blue and green and shiny. Right? My thoughts are not your thoughts. My ways are not your ways." But here's the next line, "They're so far above you." And that's what God is saying.

You go ponder what you think God should be, it isn't going to be anything like what God is. And that's the idea. Do we have something in natural revelation? Oh, sure. But in your heart, what you want God to be is not what God is. And that is, by definition, idolatry. What's the answer? Here's the paradigm problem: idolaters, idolatry infecting the synagogue or, you know, idolatry infecting the Church, the answer is Scripture. Look at the next verse now, verse 10, "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it spring forth and sprout, giving seed and sower and bread to the eater." Oh yeah, that's right. The rain comes down, does all the stuff, grows all the stuff, it accomplishes good things.

"So my word," look at this, "So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth." My truth. I'm self-disclosing, self-revelation. "It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I send it." And, you know one of the things that it sent us to be? To correct, rebuke, train us in righteousness. It's to get us to inform us who God is. If you think God is like you, you're wrong. God is like God and he needs to tell you what he is so that you can adjust your thinking to him. Our tendency is to think wrongly about God. Our culture, oh, massively times ten. And so we're saying we're Christians and we read the Bible and still our tendency is sadly to be like little children and to try and incorporate kind of our cultural thinking with what the Bible says and maybe we can package this, we can get to a view where, you know, I kind of think God is like this. We've kind of rounded off the edges because we don't like this, we don't like that. That doesn't fit. I'd never say that in polite company.

And so I got a view of God, and it's kind of nice, it's plastic, it's shiny, it's good, and I like it. And the Bible keeps reminding us that God has given us the Bible to take our view of God and make it completely responsive in every way to the way the Scripture has described God. We need to have our minds transformed. Right? Not conformed to the world, but "transformed by the renewal of our minds." We need our brains to comport with Scripture. The answer to every aspect of idolatry is Scripture, is God's self-disclosure.

Let me just put it this way. Your speculation is of no consequence. What is important is God's self-disclosure, God's written word. God has spoken. And he said, here's what I'm like, here's what I value. Our culture, they got a whole different view. Let's talk about that. Go back to Acts Chapter 17. Let's look at verse 18. We start having some descriptions of some of the ways of thinking, and it starts with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. Okay? This is part of what has saturated their culture in Athens in the first century. So let's give this a title and say, well, there may be some connections to where we live today, and not that we have to draw a



straight line because I don't think many of us here are saying, "Well, I'd want to become an Epicurean." Right? But let's try and see if we can find something that somehow corresponds at least in subject and say, well, yeah, this is still alive and well in our culture and make sure that we're aware of it because they don't jibe.

The cultural concepts, the secular culture doesn't jibe with God's self-disclosure. So I want to be careful that that doesn't influence my reading of the Bible, my processing of sermons, my reading of Christian books and Christian theology, Christian doctrine. I want to make sure I'm looking at Scripture and caring what God has said about himself. So I need to, number two on your outline, "Beware of Cultural Thinking." I need to be aware of it. I need to be discerning. I need to be discriminating when I hear the world having its ideas.

What about the Epicureans? Now again, Epicurean philosophy, we could go into great depth. We could talk like historians for an hour about Epicurus and all that he taught in the third century B.C., third and fourth century B.C. Well, let me just summarize and get it down to the nub. You philosophers or historians, go, "That's so truncated." I get it. This is a reductive summary. Let me give you three basic things that Epicurus and what he taught. Let's start with this. Right? The gods, which they would say there are gods, they're detached from your life. They're out there. They don't... They're kind of like the deists in early colonial America. They're not involved. God's not breaking through and doing anything so just don't even think about that.

Number two, there's no afterlife. No afterlife to speak of, really. That's just what their philosophy led to. Just don't worry about what's beyond the horizon of this life. And number three, so we need to make good with what we got here now. You need to do your best with what we got here now. You need to try and find the best in what we have now. You need to enjoy what we have now. Some people talk about Epicureans and think about this is like the frat boy philosophy, right? "Have a good time." It is about being happy. But they did believe in like higher happiness, like being in tune with things and harmony with nature. But it was like these higher things, it doesn't matter what they believed. What matters is what is our culture saying. Epicurus had a lot of influence on first-century culture, Roman / Greek culture. But today, what's having an influence on us?

Let's start with this one, Letter "A." When it comes to just looking at Epicureanism and saying, is there anything there that we see alive and well and thriving in our culture? I know this: this kind of philosophy is out there. Here is cultural thinking in 21st-century America. Ready? Letter "A." "Do what you want." Right? That comports in some way with epicureanism. And I would say, well, let's just think about that. Now forget history. Let's think modern day. "Do what you want." Do you think the culture outside the walls of the Church is concerned about that as a way of thinking about life? Oh, yeah! Right? Absolutely. "Do what you want."

And you're saying, "Pastor Mike, I'm in church, man. I'm a Christian. We want to do what Christ wants, what God wants. That's what I'm all about. I made that decision years ago. I'm a follower of Christ." Well, I'm sure that the fungus on the walls of a culture is certainly not affecting your life. I can take Epicurean philosophy, or at least just the idea of do what you



want to do. Have fun. Go after it. Do what pleases you. And we can look outside the walls of church and say, "That's what they're saying, 'You got a desire, sexual or otherwise just you should do it. You got to be authentic. You got to be true. You got to find some happiness out there.' But that doesn't affect us." And I would say, well, from the frat houses to the Christian kitchen table, I think there's certainly an infection that's taken place.

And I know that because I listen to Christian parents talk about their children and they talk about their children this way. When their children are sitting around the kitchen table and they're pouring their cereal or whatever, serving up their eggs in the morning and they're thinking about the future of their children and what they want. Do you know what they want their kids to be? If I said, "What do you want for your kids?" If I said, "What are they going to do in life? What is their job going to be?" They say, "I just want Johnny to be... That's what I want." I'm going to say the culture has infected your thinking. "I want Johnny to be happy." Shouldn't be. "I don't care if he's an architect. I don't care if he's a missionary. I don't care if he's a plumber. I just want him to be happy." Right? Your kid dating: "I just want him to find a wife to make him happy, make him happy."

To put this in perspective here. The theme verse for our church is "To be led by truth and light to God." And we're saying that should be the compass of our Compass Bible Church. That the idea, right? External, alien to me, God's information needs to incorporate into my mind and it needs to do it without any filter, right? I'm not going to take the culture and say, Well, the culture doesn't like that. I got to filter that out." I want God's truth to determine what I am.

Here's how I'll put it. Your desires, your feelings. Right? They make for a lousy life compass. They make for a lousy compass. If you just do whatever you feel, which, by the way, I had to look up like, what are the latest expressions of the... I came up with this list and crafted it all. And then I thought, well, what is being said? I know it intuitively this is what's happening in our culture, but I read all kinds of stuff. I didn't know the pop songs that are written with the title, you know, "Do What You Want." I read some pretty saucy things this week.

But the point is, it's alive and well, not only in the most debauched ways in the world, but in the Church when people think, "I want for my kid's happiness, I want them to find happiness. And I would think if I as a parent want that for my kids well then God wants that for me. I'm God's child. He wants me to be happy." And all I'm saying is when the analogies of Scripture start to be understood, that sheep are prone to wander and what they need is obedience to the shepherd, and we need to follow the shepherd and the whole concept of following Christ is taking up our cross, denying yourself and following him that that is a picture of me saying, "Well, then my nose, my little child nose of following my own desires is not the right way to go. I have to be submissive to the shepherd who's going to take me into places where the sheep would naturally go, they would wander into danger.

And not only into danger, by the way, look at these people who are proffering this kind of stuff in our culture that you should do what you want. Please yourself, be authentic. Do whatever you please. Watch where that leads them. I just saw one last night on this little biography. It's just these people, it's just a mess. Jesus, to put it in Jesus' terms, Jesus told a parable about



a guy who wanted to do stuff that he wanted to do. And he finally went out and did what he wanted to do. And the story ends this way. He's sitting in a pigpen eating the pods that the swine were eating and he's eating them. And then he comes to himself and he says, "Even the hired servants in my father's house are better off than I am." He recognizes that following your desires as your moral compass is the worst possible thing that you can do.

I can take my desires, lay them on the altar of what Christ has said he has died for, it's called my sin, and I need to follow him. And guess what? He's not going to lead you down paths that are always going to make you happy. He's going to have you deny things that you think are going to make you happy. And he's doing it really ultimately for our good and his glory, but our good. Read the book of Ecclesiastes. The whole point is you can't make your compass, your worldview be you should do what makes you happy. You just can't.

Stoics. The Stoics, which we still have that word in our culture today. Right? Talk about your dad who went through surgery, "Man, he was stoic about that. Like, he showed no emotion. He manned up, he mastered his feelings." And that is true. That is an aspect of it. Zeno was the philosopher. Epicurus and Zeno, Zeno they became known as the Stoics because they met under the Stoa, the Greek word for porch or portico, a particular portico there in Athens. And he would teach and all of his people would come and be there under this porch. And so they were called the Stoics because they gathered under the porch, under the Stoa.

And the Stoics listened to their leader, again about the fourth century, third century B.C. Zeno was teaching. And basically he said this: unlike Epicurus, it's not that the gods are just detached. The gods themselves, he taught, are subject to the fates, locked into the fates. The fates are how things are going to be and you cannot change them. And the gods themselves are subject to that. Sometimes Zeus was seen as this ultimate fate. And then everything in creation had to follow its determined path. Let's just draw a parallel to the Epicureans and this very truncated summary. But Zeno would also teach that there's no afterlife. There is an afterlife, but it's of no consequence, and you won't even know you're in it. But there's an afterlife. But it's not an afterlife that you should concern yourself with. Just like the Epicureans in that sense, don't concern yourself with anything beyond the horizon of this life.

And then lastly, if we're stuck in this fateful journey through life, it will include both pleasure and pain. But in the pain, what you need to do is to step up and master any kind of feelings that you would have to freak out. You need to be above all of that. And that's why the stoic about your dad going into surgery, he was so stoic. I mean, there's obviously is a connection to Stoic philosophy, which is that you should not freak out. And why? Because Stoic philosophy, at least I'll put it this way, is this mindset is still alive and well. This way of thinking is still alive and well. We'll call it Letter "B," and that is this: that "You'll be okay." Everything is going to be okay. You'll be okay. Right? Even if it kills you, you'll be okay. Everything's going to be okay.

And there are people today, and I think Christians sometimes even admire them, and they try to somehow find some Christian theology in the fact that this guy at work, man, it's just like he's not rattled by anything. Everything's going to be okay. Every day he's whistling a tune.



It's all fine. Everything's good. And when I start talking about politics or, you know, world news or Crimea or Ukraine, it's like, ah, he doesn't even listen to that stuff. He doesn't care. "We're not going to debate, you know, politics with him. This guy's fine. Everything's fine. I like that. They're like Jesus asleep in the boat on Galilee. I want to be like that, just fine."

You understand the concepts of not worrying and being anxious in Scripture, they do relate to something godly, but it is all in reflection to accurate teaching from the Scriptures. Right? There is a time not to be asleep in the hull of the ship. There's a time when you should be concerned and alarmed. I'll give you an example. This, I think, is the apex of the worldly philosophy today that is out there in the walls of our secular culture and is on top display at a non-Christian funeral. There's a good example of when you'll see it on display. At a non-Christian funeral, number one, we're no longer grieving that Bob died, but it's all like, dude, let's see who can get up there and tell the jokes about Bob. And then it's about, you know, the pastor getting up and talking about Bob's playing golf with Fred. And Fred died three years ago and was his best friend. But now they're all together on the green, his putting is so good. And it's probably all just... It's nonsense.

Everything's fine. No one's concerned. Everything's great. The house of mourning has become the house of Johnny Carson, right? Everything's cool. Everything's fine. And we're sitting there I hope as a Christian going everything is not fine, man. Someone needs to be talking about everything is not fine. The living should be taking lessons to heart because right now we have a real problem. And that not only happens in the ultimate example of people whistling through the graveyard, it happens even in our lives. It can happen in our small groups where we admire someone in our small group who's not rattled by anything and we think, wow, they're godly. Maybe that's a little bit of the cultural thinking creeping into our Christian circles when in fact they should be alarmed.

There are many things you should get uptight about. There are things, by the way, just to quote the beginning verse here in verse 16, you ought to be indignant and irritated by some things. You ought to be provoked by some things because things matter and some things are problematic. One passage on this, let me just quote it for you. If you're quick, you can turn there. Jeremiah 23. Jeremiah 23. And let me encourage you to turn there if you can real quick. Jeremiah 23. That you'll be okay, everything's okay, everything's fine, everything's sunshine. Just turn on pop radio. It'll be fine. That mentality can be a serious problem for us as the people of God. Especially when your leaders start talking like that.

Verse 16, Jeremiah 23. "Thus says the Lord of hosts." Just a reminder, he's in charge of the armies of heaven. "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes." You're picturing that funeral, right? "They speak visions of their own minds, and not from the mouth of the Lord. They continually say to those who despise the word of the Lord, 'It shall be with you'; and everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you.'" The prophets are saying that? Yeah, there are plenty of them on stages across the country today in America. (with a twang accent) "You know, we don't talk about sin and we don't talk about hell, that's not calling. I'm going to talk about good



things. We do the good things. The Lord loves you. Lord, bless you, go out there and do good things."

It's like there are probably problems in your church that people need to address. There's probably sin, there are things that need to be... "That's not my calling to do all that." What does God say about that? Verse 18, for all the positive preachers out there, verse 18, "For who among them has stood in the council of the Lord." Oh, they've got some things, perhaps in their own intuitive contemplation about what they think God should do. And they're listening to the culture. They're not standing in the alien word of God, the thing that's outside of themselves, "the counsel of the Lord to see and hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened?" Oh, you want to talk about sharp edges on truth. Oh, there are sharp edges on truth. "Behold the storm of the Lord! The wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest; it will burst upon the heads of the wicked." Not on Bob. He's having fun with Fred playing golf right now. I mean, it's like, stop. There are things that we should be concerned about.

"The anger of the Lord will not turn back," verse 20, "until he is executed and accomplished the intents of his heart. In the latter days you will understand it clearly." And that will be the concern that we should all have now. What will we be concerned about at the end on the other side? We're going to look back at our life and go, wow, we should have been much more uptight about that. We should have been concerned about that. We should have invested in that. "I didn't send those prophets," verse 21. "I did not send the prophets yet they ran; I didn't speak to them, yet they prophesied. But if," I love this verse 22, "If they had stood in my council," had they taken in a word that was alien to their supposition and their speculation, the word of God, "then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds."

So many people today, it's all going to be fine. In reality there are plenty of things that are not going to be fine. And even for Christians, there are problems in our lives where we're getting ourselves in trouble with God. And I mean that in terms of that whole... Hebrews 12, the discipline of the Lord, you should go to a small group and it's not all just slapping each other on the back, saying everything going to be fine. Sometime we need to say, "Hey, Bob, we've got a problem here. We need to fix this. You're going to incur the discipline of the Lord. This is a problem."

Worldly thinking getting into the Church and again, just taking our cues from the Epicurean and the Stoic philosophers. But look at the next thing back in our passage, verse 18b. In the middle of the verse. "Some said, 'What does this babbler wish to say?'" Does that sound like a compliment to you? No, it's not. Actually, this word is clearly not a compliment. This is rough. This is a world... scrapper, you're just picking up pieces and bits of stuff. You're trying to sound like you know stuff. And you don't know stuff. You're just a babbler. "Others said, 'He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities.'" We never heard of this divinity. Can't be anybody important "because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection."

What did I say about Stoics and Epicureans? Since Luke named them and Paul obviously related to Luke, what do we know? Well, the thing that they share in common, even though



they have a different philosophy about the gods, they have different philosophies about how to live life. They have this shared philosophy. There's nothing beyond this life. And I just wonder is that thinking alive and well today? Letter "C." "This Life Is All There Is."

You go outside the walls of the Church, most people, I mean, one of the predominant voices and the fungi of this culture is trying to convince everyone all that matters is the "here and now." It's all about the "here and now." Do you want to have a good life? Great. It's going to be something between now and the time that you're dead. So you better do it before you die. Because all that matters is the "here and now."

Have I tried my best from this platform to say to you often it is not about the "here and now?" It is about the "then and there." It's about you storing up for yourself treasure in heaven. Well it affects the "here and now," but it's about you, Colossians 3 verses 1 through 4, "keeping your mind set on things above, seeking the things above" where Christ is seated. Because Christ, who is our life one day is going to appear and we're going to appear with him in glory. It's about the "then and there." We are supposed to be doing things here and now, like "seeking first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all the other things that everyone else is chasing after God will take care of all that." You're following this, right?

And I'm just saying that when it comes to the Church, how often in the Church do we think the same way, even though we say, "Oh, we're going to heaven, we care about heaven?" Most people couldn't tell me five things about heaven. They can tell me a lot about the problems in their homeowner's association, a lot of the problems of work. They can tell me all kinds of things about their hobbies. Can you tell me about the place where your mind is supposed to be seated? Can you tell me about what it means to store up treasure for that place? I'm just saying the culture that cares about the "here and now" can infect us within the Church to become idolaters in part because we think that God cares mostly about the "here and now."

And just watch this in theology, by the way, you can watch theologians who start to fudge on all the prime orthodox doctrines who then start to write books and publish books about how important the "here and now" is. I see it all the time. That guy took a left turn, and now it's all about preaching about, "Well, let's talk about what kind of culture we should be." Listen, I'm not against us helping old ladies cross the street. Or if I can find something to do to make something better, I'll make it better. That is not the primary purpose of the Christian life. I got eternity hanging in the balance for everybody I meet. This is about the "then and there."

It doesn't matter if you get a better job, it doesn't matter if you make more money, it doesn't matter if you're prettier, or it doesn't matter if you're thinner. What really matters is where you stand with Christ, because that's going to matter for eternity. And that's the perspective that cannot change. We cannot let the culture convince us to get the headlights here on the low beams, looking here just on the things in the next few years. "Do what you want." "You'll be okay." "Life is all there is."

Look at the next thing here that takes place. Verse 19, "They took him and brought him to the Areopagus. Now, I gave enough comment in the reading of this text, you know these are the



experts. These are the guys who know the stuff. "Let's just take you to the department chairs at Yale. They'll let you know whether you're right or wrong about this."

I don't know. Do you think this is a relevant summary of the problem that so often pervades our culture? Let's put it this way, Letter "D" and see if you don't agree. Ready? Letter "D," "Trust the Experts." That's what you need to do. Trust the experts. Yes, they know. The experts know. They got this figured out, man. There are smarter people working on the problems and they got it figured out. I'm sure we can figure something out. Read something they've written. Go to some kind of article. Talk to someone who knows, someone in a lab coat has figured this out. Let's talk to them. Because they know. They know. You don't know. They know.

I mean, how could you know? Well, who are you? Right? But, man, we got the elites in our culture. That's why we're going to read about what they have to say. If they've got credentials and letters after their names and they're teaching in universities. They got TED talks. Those guys know. They know what I should prioritize. They know how I should live. They know whether or not I should be pro or con against this particular thing, whether I should support this thing or be against this thing. Those guys know. Does that infect the Church? Oh, man.

When I vacation, I go and listen to preaching. And I know you probably think I'd hate all the sermons I hear. I don't. I love some of the sermons I hear. I'm like, "Dude, that was good. Yeah, I want to find the pastor. For me, that was great. I loved the sermon." But the time I'm about to tell you about was not one of those. Early on I thought it might get there because the preacher was preaching and it was going well. He was hitting on something. I thought, "Oh, man, this is good. Praise God, this guy's preaching right now."

Then as we ended and started to land the plane at the end, it went south fast. At the very end of the sermon, he had us standing for the closing prayer and he said, "Oh, by the way, if anything in this sermon that I just said started to get to where you're living, hey, I just want to let you know, don't come to us. You need to go seek professional help. Go get some help. You need to find some kind of certified, you know, family counselor. You need to find somebody out there with a psychology degree. They can work you through the problem. I mean, don't come to us. We're just the boneheaded pastors who work here. We don't know anything. All we got is the Bible. But those guys, man, they got the diagnostic manuals. They're going to figure out what your real problem is, why you wet the bed as a kid. But we don't know anything, so..."

Ah, I mean, good thing I was already standing. It got me out the door a lot faster when he said that. I'm like, what are you talking about? What in the world are you talking about? I just love the way Tyndale had the perspective. He's trying to get the Bible in the language of the people. Right? And he says, and here's how he put it, "I defy the Pope and all of his laws." Of course, this is like the dawning of the Reformation where people were looking at the Church and they departed and divorced themselves from Scripture, from teaching Scripture. And he says, "I defy the pope and his laws." And in essence, let me summarize the gist of his



argument. Listen, if we can just get the Bible, as he's put it, in the hands of the plowboy, he'll know more than the Pope and all his cardinals. Why? Because he's got the truth of the word.

Psalm 119. I think it's verse 99 when the psalmist says, you know I'm wiser than all my teachers. Like some of your testimonies, man. Got your statues here. And Tyndale knew it. And I know it that one plowboy with a Bible who can say, "Well, this is where we came from, this is where we're going, this is who we are, this is what God says about what we need to do," is a greater expert than all the experts out there who don't have the perspective of deferring to God's self-disclosure about who we are, where we came from, where we're going. We've got to stop saying in our culture that we've got to defer to the experts. The expert is someone who can tell me clearly what the Bible says, "who stood in my counsel and proclaimed my words to my people." I know what you need to do about your anxiety. I know what you need to do about your problems, your marital issues, your parenting, if I can go to Scripture and say here's the answer.

And here's a fun little extra credit for somebody in the room. C.S. Lewis wrote an essay he called it The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment. The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment. And it was precipitated by the debate going on in England on capital punishment. But it gets into jurisprudence and how to figure out, you know, how we're supposed to respond to people. And he was advocating in this essay for the retributive, that we're going to pay people back. There's going to be punishment for wrong and not the new, at that time in the 1950s, the humanitarian view of punishment.

And one thing he said, the first time I read that essay, I highlighted like just wore the page out trying to highlight the section where he says if we keep going, which he basically was saying was already taking place in England at the time, this was 70 years ago. He said, "All we'll do is keep deferring to experts as to whether or not..." In this case someone has gotten, you know, healed through his criminal lifestyle or whatever. But it hit me on so many levels in so many areas of life that today no one, he's really arguing the fact that this is going to end jury trials, because how are we going to be able to say that the moral sensibilities of a culture or a society can really judge and deem whether this person did something wrong or not or what kind of punishment he deserves? We're always going to say, well, we'll have to ask the psychologist. We'll have to ask the experts. We don't know.

Now, I'm thinking that's where we are in just about every field these days. And it's just a great essay. And then he's got complaints that come against him. You'll see like four articles that he wrote in just interacting with people's criticisms of that essay. And I'm just saying in that one section in dealing with, which is really flavored throughout the essay, the idea is we cannot get to that place. Right? God, even in the common person who's shoeing horses in the countryside can because of the image of God in this person and the idea of the conscience, where God's law is written, let alone people who actually read the Bible, can engage in the adjudication of moral wrong. As opposed to us always saying, "Well, we got to have an expert for that."



I'm just telling you, we got to be careful about this deference to, "Well, let's take you to the Areopagus to see if they really know." Let me quote for you, First Corinthians Chapter 1 verse 18. First Corinthians 1:18, "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing," even if they have PhDs behind their names, "but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. For it is written," and now he quotes the Old Testament, Isaiah 29, he says, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart. Well, then where's the wise man, Where's the scribe? Where's the debater of the age?" Where are the Epicurean and Stoic philosophies? Where is the Areopagus? Tell me where the professors are.

"Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God." Right? "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through its wisdom, so it pleased God through the folly of what was preached to save those who believe. Now the Jews, they're demanding a sign and the Greeks they want wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God, the wisdom of God. For the foolishness," quote unquote, "of God." Talking about where we came from, where we're going, who we are, what our problem is, how it's solved, whatever these basic issues of life are, whatever the response to the issues might be, "is wiser than the wisdom of men, and the weaknesses of God," that we're not accepting, We're too narrow-minded, all the things that God thinks, "is stronger than men."

He goes on to say in the next chapter, in Chapter 2, "When I came to you, brothers, I didn't come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. I decided to know nothing among you except Christ Jesus and him crucified. And when I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and power, so that your faith might not rest on the wisdom of men," until another Ph.D. can come along and say, well, that's not what I think it should be, "but it rests in the power of God. Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it's not a wisdom of this age or the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away."

Where are they going to end up? "We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this," here's the kicker, "for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." We've got a world that is crusading against the truth of God. And the Bible says all of that ends in what? Destruction. And God has given us the truth. And a plowboy can know it, a Sunday school, a seventh grader in our church can have the Bible and be in the majority because they're reflecting the truth of God. Clearly written. "Trust the experts?"

Lastly. It says in our passage in Acts Chapter 17 that they were just concerned. How is it put here? "The Athenians and foreigners who live there spend their time in nothing except telling and hearing something new." It's always something new. What's the latest? We're progressing towards something. Letter "E," "Progress Is the Answer." Do you think our world says that to us? Sure it is. Progress is the answer. They say (mocking voice), "Progressive. Progress? Utopias just around the corner. We're going, man. Just check. Look at your pocket,



man. You have in your pocket... You got computer speed and knowledge. You've got the world's knowledge in your pocket. Yeah. More computing power in your watch than there was on the Apollo missions, man. We are there!"

You read Huxley, by the way, starting from a faulty premise of human biological evolution and his assertion that we are growing in our wisdom and understanding, this epistemology had about what was, "You're going to read Utopia," because of this parallel to a false view of how we got here and now we just need to keep going. And people misunderstand even as Lewis wrote, as long as I quoted him this morning, the chronological snobbery that we have. We think we're better because we're here and we've accumulated the knowledge and wisdom and technology of former generations. Well, we may have accumulated the technology and the knowledge, stuff that you and I unless we give ourselves to that, we don't even understand it. You don't know what happens when you flip the switch on and make the lights come on, let alone you didn't even open the hood of your car before you bought it because you don't know what's going on in there anymore.

"Well, someone does, 'trust the experts.'" Well, here's the thing. All the accumulated knowledge that gives you this thing that's better than the Apollo missions in your back pocket, you got to say, where are we going in terms of people, right? The moral knowledge, the sentient kind of wisdom that you say is developing. It's not developing. Here's what the Bible says and the forecast can be told by a seventh grader with a Bible. Things are going from bad to worse. The moral decline of our culture, if you can't see that you're not anchored in some perspective that is given to us by God that says here is the standard and you will stray to your own hurt.

And we have culture now that we keep affirming, everyone applauding them going in any direction. We applaud those who the Bible says deserve God's wrath. And we just like, "Yeah, that's good," we're giving hearty approval to those folks. Yeah, you got 16-year-olds with a lot of computing power in their pocket. But what do they use it for? Right? What is happening to us as human beings, as a generation of people? Right? Trust the progress? Just one verse on this because I'm completely out of time. Jeremiah Chapter 6 verse 16. 6:16. Jeremiah. "Thus says Lord: 'Stand by the roads, and look, ask for the ancient paths,'" the old paths, "'where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.'" But they said, 'We will not walk in that path. We will not walk in it.'"

This is in the fifth or sixth century B.C. He's talking about the ancient paths that were revealed by God on Sinai in the Sinai Peninsula in the 15th century B.C. Think about that. Thousand-year-old information, they're like, "Dude, we're too modern for that. We don't want the ancient ways. We want the new ways. Give us something new." And here we are still preaching from Acts Chapter 17, 2,000-year-old Scriptures, trying to say, "Hey, what we need is the ancient. We don't need the new paths, we need the old paths." Some say, "Well, you must be a conservative." Yes, I'd like to conserve the old paths because the old paths where God has defined the way that we should walk, that's where we should walk. We shouldn't turn to the right or the left. Walk in that path. There's where you find peace. There's where you find rest. There's where you find some sympathetic, you know, relationship with the God of the



universe. There's where I get to a place where God's favor rests on me as I follow his diagnosis of my problem and the solution.

I know, I'm way late. Your kids are probably climbing the walls in the kid's ministry. So let's let the morning end. The good sermon's coming next week. We're going to get into Paul's preaching at Athens and it's good. So if you didn't like this one, give me another chance next week.

Let's pray. God, help us, please, to be people who want to breathe in the fresh air of your word. And know that we're living in a culture that's filled with the kind of black mold that can really disease us. And just because we say we're Christians, just because we follow Christ doesn't mean that we don't have a compromised view if all week long we're rubbing shoulders with a worldly thinking, a perspective, a worldview that continues to assault the way that we're supposed to think. Things about you that we don't want to bring up in the workroom at work because we know it won't be smiled upon, it'll be rebutted and refused, and it will be ridiculed and mocked and maligned. And so we try to start to believe the kinds of things that we would only say in that polite company. God help us to be truthful, respond rightly to your word, make us good stewards of it as we proclaim it to our generation. Let us be good workmen who study hard. So God, we commit this to you.

In Jesus name. Amen.