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**A0920 – May 17, 2009 – Acts 17:10-18 – The Philosophical Impact
Of The Gospel**

Alright, in the Book of Acts we've been looking at how the gospel has impacted Europe in various areas of life. We've seen the Economic Impact, we've seen what might be called the Psychological Impact, in terms of problem solving devices and we've seen the Legal Impact in both the good example by Paul and the bad example of Jason. Today we enter into another impact which takes up the rest of chapter 17 and that is the Philosophical Impact of the Gospel. These impacts are due to the fact that Christianity is not neutral, none of these areas of life are neutral. They either express the idea that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever or the chief end of man is to glorify man and enjoy himself forever; there is no other position and there is no neutrality and so there must be these collisions as the gospel invades pagan Europe.

What we'll try to do today is in two parts. First we'll follow Paul down to Berea in chapter 17:10-15 since he's been blocked out of Thessalonica. Then we'll head down to Athens, the intellectual center of the world in 17:16-18 for an introduction to the collision Paul faces with Greek philosophy. Let's begin by reading vv 10-15, Berea.

¹⁰The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so. ¹²Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. ¹³But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been

proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds. ¹⁴Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there. ¹⁵Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.

Now, in verse 10 Paul goes down to Berea, about 50 miles SW of Thessalonica, He's been following the Via Egnatia, the great Roman east-west highway, but at Thessalonica he faced such opposition and he got blocked by Jason's pragmatic philosophy to protect self from any unhappy situation, that now he diverts off the main road down to this little town of Berea. Berea was off the beaten path. And you'll notice in verse 10 that they sent them to this place by night. So it was a covert operation to get Paul out of town. Timothy probably came along later by himself. So Paul has been diverted from the path he may have taken; he may have just stuck to the Via Egnatia and followed that all the way to the Adriatic and on over to Rome, but the Holy Spirit says, no, not at this time Paul, I'm not ready for you to go to Rome, I have other plans.

and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. As was Paul's custom, when he went to any town that had a synagogue he'd stop, put on the brakes and visit the local synagogue and from there he'd fan out into Gentile society. Paul's not playing favorites; he's just following the plan of God which is to bring the gospel to the Jew first. Further, these are the people who share the same basic categories of thought and therefore he can communicate without all the counter envelopment strategy brought in by pagan Gentiles. He'll be counter-enveloped in Athens and we'll study Paul's strategy for dealing with pagan Gentiles in depth because typically the witnessing you and I do is not to Jews, it's to Greeks. We want to watch and learn from Paul's method in Athens and apply that to witnessing situations in our lives today. But here he's in the synagogue and he would follow his typical Jewish approach which starts with Gen 12 and the Call of Abraham and ask them, was Abraham justified before or after the Law was given? Before, Paul. Well, then it's by faith. Then he'd go to the Exodus and he'd say, now how was the wrath of God assuaged? By blood on the door Paul. Then salvation requires blood atonement. After that he could move to Mt Sinai where they were given the Law and have you Israelite ever violated the Law?

If you have then obviously God's holiness has to judge. And therefore your righteousness can't come from inside you it must come from the outside. And after this set up he could begin to build the Messianic profile using the great Messianic prophecies of the OT; Ps 16, Isa 53, Ps 22 and then he would say, here's the profile and Jesus fit the profile. It was a very persuasive method. Not many Jews in Thessalonica bought it but Paul got a different reception at Berea.

Verse 11 records, **these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica**. Radical contrast, these are **noble-minded**, those in Thessalonica were not. What **noble-minded means** is open minded, they were ready and willing to hear Paul and learn something. They did not come to the table and say, "Paul, we already know the word of God, so don't treat us like children." They were all ears and they said, "Paul, if what you're saying is true then God has revealed a truth in the word of God that we didn't know about and we're going to find it." That's the kind of spiritual aggression you find at Berea. Bereans, which is a term taken from this verse to apply to believers just like this through church history, are serious students of the word of God, people who are eager to get into the word of God and work things out. We'd call them aggressive students. And hopefully this is you and you can be the judge of that from what is said here.

And so it goes on and describes that **they received the word**, which is Paul's word there. Paul spoke and then it says **with great eagerness**. What Paul's witnessing is a tremendous zeal for the word, these people want to know. And then he goes on to say, **examining the Scriptures daily**. They kept searching the Scriptures every single day, not just once a week. They searched the Scriptures **daily**, and that's the practice of aggressive people, people that are really serious about their faith will always search the Scriptures **daily**. And it describes at the end, **whether these things were so**. It's an odd situation in the Greek because this is a fourth class condition, it's an optative mood, extremely rare, but means that maybe there's a chance that Paul is right and we'll examine the Scriptures every day to find out. Verse 11 is the model of a person hungry for the truth of God.

Day in day out, Paul says A, I compare A with Scripture, is A right? Can I have missed A all my life in synagogue. Sure enough, there's A, when I think about what Paul's saying and I read these Scriptures, now I begin to see A. I

never saw it before. And these people aren't the gullible, we'll believe anything type, they examined the Scriptures daily to check Paul out. This is the procedure when you come in here and you hear something I say, don't leave the church saying I don't agree with Jeremy; check it out, study daily to see whether these things are so. Get in the word and do a serious examination. If you really want to know you can come into my office or home in private and I'll walk you through the Scriptures. I'll show you the links in the chain to get from A to Z. Of course, rarely does anyone resolve doctrinal differences today. If you say one thing that gets under a person's skin they just leave. It's sad, it's bothersome but let me tell you what's really going on; rebellion against the word of God. If you won't do a serious examination of the Scriptures to see whether it's so then you are not open-minded, you're closed and you're in rebellion. You're the Thessalonican, not the Berean. You didn't call me to come to this church so I could confirm everything you already believed. You called me to preach the word! And when the word of God doesn't line up with what you believe then your beliefs have to change not your interpretation of the word. Granted you can say, "I'm not seeing it." Fine, I can show you what data I have that led to that conclusion. But don't just walk out the door and go somewhere else. Be a Berean.

Now, the result of the word of God is always faith, because faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Then are you surprised to read what comes in the next verse, Acts 17:12? **Therefore many of them believed...** Why? Because they searched the Scriptures daily, that's why. They were exposed to the word of God, the very exposure developed faith in their hearts.

And then we find another of Luke's report cards, **many of them**, those are Jews **believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.** Luke keeps bringing up the **women**, and the **prominent** ones at that. What's that **prominent** note tagged on for? Because these were ladies of the upper class. In Greek society you had the upper and lower class and the gospel was getting reception particularly among the upper class women. Why is that? We suggest it's because they were the women who thought about things. The lower class women of Rome were typically more prone to the superstitions of the gods and goddesses. But the upper class women, they thought. And it shows you that early on Christianity was not thought of as irrational at all, it was thought of as rational, something that was primarily

intellectual. And Luke's obviously commenting on the fact that it was the intellectual women of Roman society that responded positively to the gospel. These people thought, they examined, they eagerly learned and when they were convinced on the basis of the authority of Scripture, then they believed. You can't just believe if there's nothing to think about. What are you going to believe?

But then it happens in v 13. No sooner had the gospel made inroads then the opposition comes. So here comes the opposition, all the way from Thessalonica and it's the Jews, all trotting down to Berea to deal with this Paul problem. And what was their tactic? **agitating and stirring up the crowds**. As A.T. Robertson described, "Shaking the crowds like an earthquake (4:31) and disturbing like a tornado (17:8)."ⁱ It's the mob mentality, same procedure they used in Thessalonica, when you have no argument intellectually and all rational discourse is out the door. Just send the whole crowd into confusion, make it where no one has a clue what the issues even are. A sure sign of Satanic tactics. The pagan mind at enmity with God always resorts, under Satan, to chaos and confusion, the mob mentality, just drown the situation.

And so **immediately they sent Paul out to go as far as the sea**,ⁱⁱ. Notice they took him out to the edge, to the coast. It says nothing about a port, it says nothing about taking a ship out to sea, and apparently this is a fake out maneuver. So they go over to the coast as if Paul's leaving by ship but really he goes by land, **and Silas and Timothy remained there**, that is, in Berea, which shows you something important. Everywhere Paul goes there's a disturbance. It's obviously that Paul is the guy who makes waves. Silas and Timothy don't make waves. What is it about Paul that gets everyone agitated? It's the same thing that Stephen was doing to Paul back in Acts 6 that got him so agitated. Paul learned it from Stephen. He was wrecking people's framework. This really gets under people's skin. If you want to make someone mad just pull the carpet from underneath a person's belief system. I guarantee you'll get a response. People were realizing that, hey, if what Paul says is right then everything I've believed for the past 40 years is wrong, and people don't like that. I said before that Stephen was possibly the greatest intellect in the early church, but it would be very interesting to put up the Stephen of Acts 6-7 against the Paul of Acts 16-17. By this time Paul was a powerful force to be reckoned with. And it didn't take five minutes in a

discussion with Paul and he'd have you pinned to the wall and when you're dealing with a person like that you're either going to love them or hate them. And these Jews hated him. They'd travel for two days across hill and dale just to get him out of their district. That's the kind of power behind the historical framework approach. Some of you are very interested in the strategy we're learning in the framework class because now you're being able to dissect every little statement people make, and if you get adept at using it strategically you're going to be able to read people like a book. Just be careful, it's a short step from there to being a wave maker like Paul.

And so they head over to the coast from Berea, and they make it appear as if Paul is setting out to sea, but he turns back and by land heads south to the university center of the ancient world, **Athens...and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.** So evidently, that phrase **as soon as possible** is telling us that Paul expects Silas and Timothy to stay behind and **as soon as** they get some news from Thessalonica then Paul can return to the work. Paul's not going to **Athens** to work, Paul's going to Athens to wait, Paul was called to Macedonia, not Achaia. Athens is in Achaia, and so Paul is going to wait things out, but the Holy Spirit has other plans for Paul. Paul goes to Athens to wait, the Holy Spirit sent Paul to work.

So verse 16, Paul arrives. Now, **Athens** is a long way from Berea, 341 miles, so he's far south and **Athens**, let's put it this way, is the greatest intellectual center ever established by Greek and Roman civilization. In the 5th and 4th centuries BC it housed the great sculptures from the age of Pericles, out of its universities flowed the great literature and out of its halls of debate oratorical skills of unsurpassed greatness. It was the cradle of democracy and of central importance, the native city of Socrates and Plato and the adopted home of Aristotle, Epicurus and Zeno, very influential philosophers in history. As for Socrates it is said, in Athens Socrates can never quite die. As for Plato, Alfred North Whitehead said, *"The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato."*

Now, Acts 17, from this point on is more important to your witnessing today than any other chapter in the book of Acts because today our fights aren't mainly in Jewish synagogues; our fights are with the Athenian spirit, the

same Greek spirit that permeates everything around us. So Paul's analysis of the Athenians and his gospel preaching to the Athenians is going to become a model for us to learn how to do it in our day.

So here Paul is, he's landed in the center of the kingdom of man and for all the great pieces of art, architecture and sculpture what was foremost in his mind in v 16? Is it the great works of the kingdom of man? Is Paul struck by the glorious achievements of autonomous man? What struck Paul was the fact the city was **full of idols**. This is what stirred up Paul's spirit within him. Paul looked out, and we can guesstimate from voting records in Athens at the time that the population was about 5,000. It was nothing more than a large town, population wise. But the great buildings of the previous era still stood. On the sides of those buildings, and on the frescoes of those buildings were many, many, what we would call works of art. But Paul didn't call them art for art's sake; Paul called them **idols**. Paul saw theological significance to statues and art work; he was far more aware of it than we are. We forget that the product of an artist's hands, his brush and his pen is a product of his heart; what a man produces is a reflection of how he thinks. Those of you who've been through Frances Schaeffer's series *How Shall We Then Live?* know, or ought to know by now, that music, art, literature and architecture are a person's expression of their theological position. Paul knew that no person was neutral and therefore nothing a person produced was neutral, and that's why he said Athens was overrun with idolatry. We wouldn't say that, we would just take the tourist bus to Athens and see the great stone statues, ah, beautiful ancient art. But Paul's **spirit was stirred within him**. In the midst of 5,000 people there were 30,000 statues in Athens at the time according to Pliny; one Roman writer, Petronius said it's easier to find a god in Athens than a man. There were six statues for every one person that still lived there.

So Paul was colliding with Greek thought. Let's look a little more deeply at it because today in getting down to verse 18 we want to prepare for Paul's defense. Next week Paul gets to defend the faith, so today we're just going to get the background by researching the unbelieving target. We must, as Paul demonstrated, know our opponent, know how the unbeliever thinks. It's rather ridiculous to say, "Do you believe in Jesus? Are you saved? An unbeliever doesn't even know who Jesus is or what he's supposed to be saved from. And so we have to understand the unbeliever first and that's what

we're going to try to do this morning, get background on this thing. So let's read what happened and then we'll try to understand why what happened to Paul happened to Paul. Because what happened to Paul here I'm convinced is what happens to us 99.9% of the time we try to share the gospel.

Verse 17, So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing *Gentiles* and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. ¹⁸And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"— because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

Now, the concluding report of v 18 is not a good report. Something went wrong and that something is Paul got enveloped by unbelief and the gospel just bounced right off them, no effect whatsoever. What went wrong? To understand what went wrong we have to do a little review of the unbeliever.

The first thing about the unbeliever is that he's fallen, this goes for the believer's fallen nature too, so we can't get too prideful. We share the fallen flesh and we can all think this way. Don't think you're immune. Now, what the Bible says about the fallen flesh is that it's at enmity with God. And therefore the very first thing you have to understand about any fallen person, whether they be your best friend or your worst enemy is that they are fallen and at enmity with God. And so when you talk to them you're talking into a hostile situation.

Now, out of this we learn a second thing. If all men have a fallen flesh and the fallen flesh is at enmity with God then do all men know God is there? Do all men have God consciousness? Well, how could all men be at enmity with a God they didn't know was there? If you're at enmity with someone you're pretty sure they're there. And Paul says they do know God is there, that's Rom 1. Paul says all men know God because God made it evident to them and therefore no person who has ever walked the face of the earth has been ignorant of the existence of God. And therefore the first warning I give you in evangelizing people is to never buy the line when a person says, "I'm not really sure God exists." Paul didn't buy it and you shouldn't buy it. God says they know Me alright, they're just suppressing that knowledge.

And therefore, the third thing we know is that if men are suppressing their knowledge of Him and they are at enmity with Him then no one is neutral, a crucial point rarely caught in our society. But you see this all over the place. You see it in the fact that educators want neutrality in the public classroom under the establishment clause, when there's no such thing. If I say, we, at our school, teach mathematics as religiously neutral, and therefore we have math in the classroom but we don't have religion are you not therefore saying that math is the same whether or not God exists? And if math is the same whether or not God exists then math cannot be the result of God's act of creating it. And that doesn't sound very neutral at all. Or if you say, well, I grant that God may very well exist but math remains the same whether or not He does. Then what have you also said? Have you not said that God has not revealed anything about math? Indeed you have. In fact, what you have said when you say we teach mathematics as religiously neutral is that God could not possibly exist and the Scriptures could not possibly be true. But I certainly do exist and what I say is certainly true. And that is a far cry from religious neutrality.

Now, what I have not said is that unbelievers can't use mathematics and get the right answer. I never said that. We haven't said they can't go to the grocery store and buy a gallon of milk. Nor have we said that the checker can't count out the right amount of change. What we've said is that their worldview can't account for the how they can do that. No pagan worldview can explain why it is that we can count or buy milk, it never has and it never will. Only the Christian worldview gives an adequate account for why we can count. And that is because God made the universe and sustains the universe such that there's a stability of categories so that things aren't changing all the time. And that God made man in His image so there's a correspondence between what's outside of man, nature and man's mind. No pagan worldview can explain that correspondence. They use it but they can't explain it. Now, what that means is that all men, Christian and non-Christian, will inevitably get things right, they will all inevitably view some things correctly. It's simply unavoidable. As hard as they work to suppress the knowledge of God they can never be 100% successful. Why? Because no one can escape God's reality. And therefore we have a very important *point of contact* with the unbeliever. We all share the same reality. If we did not then we would have no possible means of communicating with the unbeliever. We'd be

totally cut off. So Paul is going to next week use these points of contact to engage the non-Christian. And when the non-Christian is inconsistent with his starting point Paul's going to use that. This is why you always want to be listening to what the non-Christian says, you're listening for inconsistencies, and they're everywhere, so you listen and listen and when he slips you use that. No unbeliever can be completely consistent to their unbelieving presuppositions. The world is not what the unbeliever says it is. Unbelieving people will always be inconsistent at some point. Just as, for example, Jean Paul Sartre, the French existentialist philosopher who said that reason could not be used to decide any question of right and wrong, reason has nothing to say in the area of right and wrong, but then he turned around and used reason to say the Algerian war was wrong. At which point Sartre destroyed his own system by using reason to decide a moral question.

Now, what this means is absolutely damning. What it means is that if you reject God and His word then inevitably you have committed intellectual suicide. Inevitably you hold to a system that is self-contradictory. Put another way, the famous Christian apologist Cornelius Van Til said, all unbelief is both rational and irrational. What do you mean? How can that be? What we mean to say is that, for example, you have the evolutionist and the evolutionist scientist goes into the laboratory and does his experiments. And the presupposition behind doing the experiments is that there is such a thing called natural law and natural law means that the laws of nature are always the same. Gravity is always there, the laws of motion are always there and therefore I can do my experiments and predict behavior. Over and over I can repeat my experiment with the same conclusions, right? That's determinism. Natural law determines. And it's 100% rational to say. But let's think of the evolutionary worldview for a moment. Evolution believes that all things arose by what? By Chance. Chance is ultimately back of all. Chance being the idea that anything can happen and that through random molecular movements the complexity and organization of life we observe today spontaneously arose. Now, is it rational to say that? That is a 100% irrational statement. Thus, if I am an evolutionist and all is Determined by Natural Law but all arose by Chance that's an rational-irrational belief system. By definition Chance and Determinism are contradictory principles. Either one is true and the other is false but they both can't be true. It is one example of what we mean when we say all unbelieving systems are both rational and irrational at the same time. It breaks down.

Now, you say, okay, I hear you, but who cares? What difference does it make? The difference is that inevitably such systems are idolatrous. You say, well, I don't see any idols. Paul saw idols in his day but we're too advanced for that, we're a scientific society. Well, maybe you caught it, maybe you didn't, but embedded in the evolutionary system we just described was idolatry. What does the evolutionist say about natural law? Natural law, take $F=MA$, force equals mass times acceleration. Is that always true Mr Evolutionist? Yes. Always and everywhere? Yes. Then have you not just said that $F=MA$ is immutable. It never changes. Of course you have. But once you've done that you've just ripped off one of the attributes of God. And now you've applied it over here to part of the universe. This is exactly what idolatry is. You haven't gotten rid of the attributes of God, you've just re-located them, transferring them from the Creator of the universe to the universe itself. And further, by saying $F=MA$ is true everywhere then you've also stolen God's omnipresence, saying the law is everywhere. And three, you've claimed virtual omniscience, because who could ever know such a thing. There's three attributes stolen from God and placed on the universe already. Or try this one on, and this is one most of you have probably seen. Ask someone on the street, how did the universe begin? Oh, well it was the Big Bang, alright, what happened? Well, there was this infinitely small, infinitely dense material that expanded into our present universe. Alright, well can you tell me where this infinitely small, infinitely dense material came from? Well, it was just there. But where did it come from? It didn't come from anywhere, matter can be neither created nor destroyed? I quote another law of nature. So it was always there? Yes, that's what I'm saying. Alright, now what have you done to the universe? You've said it has no beginning. You've said it's eternal. You've ripped off another attribute of God. We could go on all day but the point is that idolatry in our society is all over the place. Were Paul to step into a modern scientific laboratory his spirit would be stirred because the assumptions in the laboratory were **full of idols**, not a particle of difference with Athens. All autonomy does this. Why? Because man cannot live without the attributes of God. He must have them but the place he insists we have them is inside the creation and not in an outside Creator. He worships and serves the creature more than the Creator.

So they're fallen, they know God is there but they're actively suppressing Him, they're at enmity with Him, therefore, far from neutrality they

inevitably distort reality and fall into idolatry. So putting that all together watch what they do to neutralize Paul's message. Paul is in the **market place**, what they called the *Agora*, it was the place people did business and they'd have their goods all displayed in carts and tiny stores, people buying and selling. And Paul's milling around because this is where all the action is. And whoever he ran into he'd engage in discussion. So between the cabbage and the carrots he'd be discussing Jesus and the resurrection. And this went on daily, imperfect voice, day after day he was reasoning in the marketplace, Paul didn't give up. And in verse 18, finally, **some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him**. These were the professors of two local philosophy schools, we'll look at their beliefs next week, but the students of the schools had been disputing with Paul and finally they came to the professors. What's this Paul guy trying to say and so they come out to converse with Paul, also in the imperfect, day after day Paul and the professors, Paul and the professors and they conclude with two things. Some, **What would this idle babbler wish to say?** Others, **He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,**—because he was **preaching Jesus and the resurrection**.

Now the word **babblers** is a little off the mark; this word, literally means "seed-picker." That was a slang term for a very interesting idea. It came from the fact that as people would stroll down the *Agora* and they'd be selling grain here and flour here and meat over here, that food would fall to the ground and roll down into the gutter, and of course the birds would come down and pick it up. Well, the birds would come down and they'd pick up a little of this seed, a little of that seed, a little of some other seed, and the food of the birds was made up of diverse sources. And so the word "seed-picker" came, even before Paul's time, to refer to an eclectic person, a person who hears a little Aristotle, a little Socrates, a little Zeno and they'd throw together a philosophy from these different sources. And so they're saying Paul, you're just a seed-picker, you've heard bits and pieces of philosophy and you've put it together and it's a mess. It's just scraps, Paul.

It would be just what some unbelieving person thinks when you come up and say Jesus died for your sins to save you. Jesus, who's she? Or Jesus, you mean that guy in that ancient book. Why that's ridiculous. Besides, save me from sin? You've let your guilt complex get the best of you. I mean, if Jesus helps you deal with the psychology of guilt, that's fine for you, but I manage

things quite differently. What's he done? You've tried to give the gospel but it was like water off a ducks back. He neutralized you and the gospel message. He's enveloped you and your Christian message into his unbelieving framework. You say one thing; he reinterprets it inside his framework. You say another, he reinterprets again. So his framework envelops yours. And that's what we mean by this, the other side just like a big amoeba slurps up your message and reinterprets it so he's effectively cut you off. The gospel hasn't even been heard and his framework has won.

Now Paul, when he structures his speech, beginning in verse 22, is going to have to avoid this problem. Trust me, by the end of v 18, Paul was not pleased. Paul didn't like it when he got enveloped. What Paul had to do and what we have got to learn to do is to reverse that outcome. We have got to take them and envelop them inside our framework so now it's our framework that slurps up and re-interprets him inside God's plan. And that's what every witnessing situation is about, that's what every conversation is about, it's about one framework or the other framework slurping up the other one. It gets back to your presuppositions again, ultimate commitments, it's a war of worldviews.

And so what they've done with this question, **What would this idle seed-picker wish to say?"** is they've said, Paul, Christianity is an eclectic religion, Christianity is made up like a jigsaw puzzle of pieces and Paul, you don't know what you're saying, even if you could say something.

The second response, some others say, **"He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.** Now in the Greek, it looks like this, Jesus is the name *Iesous* and the word for resurrection is *Anastasis*. They're not thinking of the meaning of the word, "resurrection," like you and I do, they're thinking of the word as a name of a person. That's the way it's coming out. *Iesous* and *Anastasis*. *Iesous* is masculine, *Anastasis* is his feminine counterpart. And so when they heard this they said he's talking about a god and his goddess. *Iesous* and *Anastasis*. And so they thought, Paul wants us to absorb these two new gods into our Pantheon. After all, if you have 30,000 gods why not have 30,002; we can add to our collection. And so Paul has got to discover how to avoid the problem of having his framework slurped up by theirs and reinterpreted.

So, you can see that Paul was facing a very modern problem. And that is, how do we articulate the gospel to people so this doesn't keep happening? How do we avoid having conversations day after day, year after year that turn out like this? Because this is a mess. We often wonder how, after I delivered such a clear gospel message, did the person get that out of what I said? How they did it was with their flesh. The flesh is at enmity with God and it reinterprets, reinterprets and reinterprets. Everything you say goes out and comes back distorted. They envelop you and they win. How do we cut through all that so that we envelop them and we win? Not the argument. This isn't about winning arguments; this is about honoring the Lord in our presentation of His gospel. That's what Paul was after and that's what we're after.

ⁱ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol.V c1932, Vol.VI c1933 by Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), Ac 17:13.

ⁱⁱ Why did Paul leave here immediately? Was he afraid? No. He had a large number of Jewish converts who could take over the work.

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