

# Spirit-Empowered Evangelism

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Acts 17:16-34 ▪ January 29, 2023 ▪ Nick Braitto

## **Jesus promised His disciples the Holy Spirit would empower them as they went out with the Gospel:**

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (*Jesus, in Acts 1:8*)

## **Paul was a man who looked to the Holy Spirit for this power as he shared the Gospel:**

"At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak." (*Paul, in Colossians 4:3-4*)

"[Pray] also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak." (*Paul, in Ephesians 6:19-20*)

## **We, too, can and should look to the Holy Spirit to empower us with...**

**...eyes that see what we need to see.** (v. 16c)

**...hearts that feel what we need to feel.** (v. 16b)

**...feet that go where we need to go.** (v. 17)

**...mouths that say what we need to say.** (vv. 22-31)

## **Acts 17:16-34**

<sup>16</sup> Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. <sup>17</sup> So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. <sup>18</sup> Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babbler wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. <sup>19</sup> And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" <sup>20</sup> For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." <sup>21</sup> Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

<sup>22</sup> So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup> For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup> The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, <sup>25</sup> nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. <sup>26</sup> And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, <sup>27</sup> that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, <sup>28</sup> for "'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, "'For we are indeed his offspring.'

<sup>29</sup> Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. <sup>30</sup> The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup> because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

<sup>32</sup> Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." <sup>33</sup> So Paul went out from their midst. <sup>34</sup> But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them. (ESV)

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### ***Personal Reflection or Group Discussion Questions***

**Open:** What's your typical practice with regard to praying about evangelism or the salvation of others?

**Read:** Acts 17:16-34

1. Paul was moved to share the Gospel after "he *saw* that the city was full of idols" (v. 16). What might God want us to notice when we look at our community? What are things people chase after that only God can provide? Give examples of how we might direct a Gospel conversation to some of these felt needs.
2. Seeing the idols in the city caused Paul's spirit to be "*provoked* within him" (v. 16). What about these idols may have upset Paul? What within our community might cause us to feel similar? Why are we not similarly provoked when we should be? How could we overcome this?
3. Paul determined to go speak about Jesus in both the "synagogue" and the "marketplace" (v. 17). Where might we find opportunities to speak about Christ? Is it better to go create opportunities to speak about Jesus or to instead aim to seize the opportunities God gives us? Explain.
4. Paul was called a "babbler" (v. 18) and was also "mocked" (v. 32) by those who heard him talk about Jesus. How are you affected by knowing people might do this to you if you speak about Jesus? What do the following verses tell us about Paul's willingness to endure such mockery—Philippians 3:10, Romans 5:3-5, Hebrews 12:2, and Hebrews 10:35-39? What helps you to be willing to endure such things?
5. As you look over Paul's Gospel presentation in verse 22-31, how do you observe him giving his message in a way that considered his unique audience? Even though Paul tailored his words to his audience, what essential components of the Gospel do you observe in his message?

**Apply:** What can we learn from Paul's example about sharing the Gospel with those around us? What's one thing you will do this week to practice Spirit-empowered evangelism?

**Pray:** Pray we'd be empowered by the Spirit to see what we should see, feel what we should feel, go where we should go, and say what we should say. Pray as well that our Gospel proclamation would bear fruit.