



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 59 Getting to Know the Unknowable God Pt. 4
By Pastor Jody May 12/17/2023

Acts 17:22-27 ESV

Paul Addresses the Areopagus

²²So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³For 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. ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶And 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, ²⁷that 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, ²⁸**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.’”

²⁹**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.**

[READ THE TEXT]

[PRAY]

[INTRO]

[REVIEW]

In Paul’s sermon in helping the Greeks, the Pagans, to **know the unknown God**, he has worked with a top-down view of God while practicing good apologetics after being made keenly aware of their desire to worship a higher power.



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²³ 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.

His presentation to the judges of philosophical and religious debate at the Aeropaus along with the populace, which were welcomed and hosted at this public court, was initiated with what he found in their culture: **temples, priests, and their idols**. He sees they have a lot of religion, a lot of gods, and even a healthy fear of offending any forgotten deities. Because of this immense pressure to recognize the gods and their role in this world, based on his interactions with his new friends the Epicureans and the Stoics, he wants to help them get to the bottom of this dilemma for he is emotionally distraught over their errors.

Acts 17:16 ESV

¹⁶ 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.

It has stirred him up to the point he ignores the lessons from his past that people don't like it when you point out their idolatry especially when it disrupts their way of life. He doesn't wait for his friends to join him, he accepts the invite to the Areopagus/Mars Hill for some spiritual warfare, and embarks **not on destroying their religiosity**, but he seeks to take what is true in it and **show them the reality behind those beliefs**.

V.24 - God is the Creator, it wasn't Chaos, He isn't distant, and He made things in such a way that would drive people to seek Him out and that's the point of our existence. This shows God's favor towards worship and relationship.

V. 25 - God is Sustainer, meaning God doesn't need us but we need Him, and He desires to carry our burdens, resolving our past sins, our current struggles, and the problems waiting for us in our tomorrows.



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V. 26 - God is the Ruler of the Nations, meaning there is only one race and one way of Salvation for all men and that comes through one king that we all get to share.

Paul started with the Biggest Picture of God's involvement and has been getting smaller teaching how the same God who is the creator of the universe is also the same God aware and concerned for the needs of man. He will now show **how and why does God do that for people**, why is He concerned, why He cares, why does He go out of His way to save, and he'll do it by showing a personal and intimate connection.

4. God is the Father of all Humanity.

²⁸ 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.**’

²⁹ 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.

Paul is making the observation that people are more closely related to this God than they think, for we are made in his image – the word he uses to relate that idea is the word **offspring**, *people related by family ties*.¹ He is also using good apologetics in his evangelism for he is quoting two different authors of Greek origin. That means he's smart enough to show them that in their culture they have similar ideas as the Jews. BUT unlike other places in Paul's letters these are not scripture references they are Greek references to their poets which the Athenians would have birthed...

This first quote, “*In him we live and move and have our being*” is a hymn to Zeus by Epimenides of Crete in 600 BC, of which he quotes the same stanza in

¹ γένος (*genos*). n. neut. **kind, race, family, birth, offspring**. Refers to a person, or group of people, that are bound together by familial ties or race... Finally, it can be used to refer to offspring. In Acts 17:28-29 Paul says twice (once quoting from a Greek poet) that we are God's offspring (*genos*). McLaurin, D., III. (2014). [Ancestry and Posterity](#). D. Mangum, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, & R. Hurst (Eds.), *Lexham Theological Wordbook*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.



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Titus 1:12. The second quotation, “*For we are indeed his offspring*” is from the poem *Phainomene* by the Stoic poet Aratus, 315–240 BC. Paul is no way and shape condoning idolatry by using their art to relate to them, BUT he’s smart enough to understand **their art displays deep needs within the culture**. Perhaps he is picking up on man’s need to be tightly connected to their creator. As you remember the Greeks creation story was born out of chaos, and man was an afterthought created with no greater purpose than entertainment for the gods.

I believe that there is much to pick up from Paul’s use of apologetics here. To recognize what is the need, to look at what is it that men are yearning for in their worship. People want a real connection to the Universe, to each other, and they will find it in whatever tribe is around them the most when they are under duress. Whether they want to be accepted by the UFO community or the paranormal activity squad, to the social justice warrior society and all its’ separate branches, of which Tik Tok has become the new temple where they all meet. Like Paul, I see they are very religious, **but unlike the Greeks they are not worried about getting along with others** that think differently than they do. Currently in our culture our people have a desire to believe only in the family unit they have adopted into, because everyone has a deep sense of security that needs to be met for health and flourishing, so they close in their intellectual walls, and they shut others out, because what they fear the most is that their world will come crumbling down around them, and then what?

Here’s what people want, here’s what people need: **they need to know they belong somewhere and to someone**. BUT their biggest problem is they have shut their minds to the truth.

Romans 1:18-19 & 24-25 ESV

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness **suppress the truth**.

¹⁹ For what can be known about God is **plain** to them, because God has **shown it** to them. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because **they exchanged the truth about God for a lie** and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.



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The truth that God wants all men to know is that they belong somewhere, they have someone to belong to. All people come from the same line, one race to share one king, and that means if they accept that, then they too can be brought back into that family, that one line. Along with that truth our culture receives something it severely lacks, **a loving Father, that wants to bless them forever...**

As we have done for the last several weeks, I want to build on Paul's sermon point now and go to a scripture that shows Paul's intent when he talks about being offspring of God.

Romans 8:16-18 ESV

¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are **children** of God,
¹⁷ and **if children, then heirs—**
 heirs of God and
 fellow **heirs** with Christ,
 provided we suffer with him
 in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Future Glory

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time (are not worth comparing)
 with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

The glory of the Gospel is through faith and repentance we not only receive our king, but we discover that we have **inherited a Father**. A father that while we were rebellious, He opened our eyes to the reality of His Son, to save us, just because He chose to love us. But here's the challenge and this is why you have to let the Bible speak for itself:

Acts 17:19 ESV

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.

People can't make up the image of a Father in their head especially when they are prone to reject the truth (Rom 1). The scripture must speak for itself, and



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we must pray for faith to believe it, and challenge our beliefs when scripture does not support them.

Acts 17:28-29 is the introduction to the **Doctrine of Adoption** and the ramifications of when we are joined with Christ, **we not only gain** a Lord, a King, a Friend **but we also gain** who He is connected to, His family beginning with **the Father**. We are going to use Paul's text here in Romans for it takes the intent of what Paul means by offspring even one step further, to show us the **blessings** of that relationship.

[Illustration] Pastor Keith and I just got back from Ecuador in October where we spent the week in the little fishing town of **Penas Blancas**. Roughly 300 square yards of 25-30 concrete block shack structures of the very poor and forgotten people of the Afro-Ecuadorians. In these buildings I kept finding homes where moms were living with daughters with multiple children by multiple fathers, that in most cases were absent 90% of the time. **Marriage and male commitment** to the family dynamic in this culture had all been **eradicated**. There was no monetary security, no sense of lineage/heritage, and no drive to build for the next generation for these children; in short there was no sense of family pride for **the fathers had abandoned** their children.

The byproduct of this predicament has brought about a culture of men who have no sense of worth in and of themselves. The suicide rate among men there is extremely high because they have hit the proverbial wall of, **"What's the point?"** That's why we were there, to begin to discover how do we become involved in the lives of these people, these men, because there is an **answer** for that, it's called the **Gospel**. The Gospel is the hope of the fatherless, it calls and emboldens men, it is the answer for a future, and it gives us all a name worth living for. The Gospel does this by making us more than just children of God it, makes us His **heirs**. Back to Romans 8...

V. 17 states, *"and 'if' children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ,"*

What is an heir? That's a term that we are not too familiar with in our day and age.



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κληρονόμος (klēronomos). n. masc. **heir**. *Someone who will inherit the possessions from a parent.*²

1. First thing we take note of is that **For God there is no distinction between a child and an heir**, to be one is to automatically be the other. Paul explained it this way.

Galatians 4:7 ESV – *“So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.”*

This is something that was widely understood in the Roman world at the time, it did not matter of your status whether you were adopted or born into a family everyone had the same rights as to an inheritance (**Ben-Hur is an example**). God is not an absent Father, neither is He distant or uncommunicative, no, He is a father that is storing up future blessings (an inheritance) while at the same time training us in how to use those blessings (sanctification). Because all His children bear the same responsibility, that is to be a name bearer of God.

[Challenge] Today, there may be some of you, that to you, your family name never meant that much, but please understand that for those that are children of God, that status changes all of that now, because of your heirship. To be an heir of God means that **your family name now has value**, it means He is redeeming that name’s worth, our names are no longer judged by those ancestors that have come before us, but rather our **names are infused** with the infinite worth of God. God redeems lineages and he restores the worth of our names through the Gospel. While we were still slaves to sin, Christ died for us and made us heirs to restore our earthly names while we have breath.

2. The second thing to take note of is that **Our inheritance is something that is shared**, *“we are fellow heirs of Christ” (Rom 8:17)*. This is not something we earned, it is not something due to us, it is something though that is due to Christ.

What exactly did Christ earn?

² McLaurin, D., III. (2014). [Ancestry and Posterity](#). D. Mangum, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, & R. Hurst (Eds.), *Lexham Theological Wordbook*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.



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Hebrew 1:2-4 ESV

²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed **the heir of all things**, through whom also he created the world. ^{3a}He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

He has **earned his inheritance - all things**, that is **ownership and dominion**, He is the sovereign ruler over the Universe.

What was the way in which he earned this?

^{3b} After **making purification for sins**, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Christ earned His inheritance by being sinless **providing a perfect sacrifice for sins through Himself purifying 'US' from sin**, proving through His life, how great the name of God truly is.

How well did He do this?

^{3a} *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.* Jesus performed perfectly because His Father is perfect, He was the exact imprint.

You see the other Gospel ramification here in being a fellow heir with Christ is **I don't have to be perfect** to earn this inheritance, Jesus was, He is, and shall always be! I get this inheritance from the King of all things, I am connected to the ruler of the cosmos, by doing absolutely nothing, except receiving this blessing by Faith through Grace, it is shared with us.

3. The third thing to take note of is **Our inheritance is ours to be had, but it comes with a warning on the label (price) – provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.** (Rom 8:17)

People who are joint heirs with Jesus will automatically be given the chance to glorify/honor Him. No one that bears the mark of God in their life will escape the opportunity of making much of Him. You too will have a chance to show some of the radiance of Christ. What may be a little hard to swallow is the



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provided we suffer with him part. Here's where we need to capture our thoughts and be not conformed by them but rather be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2).

Let me remind us that all life comes with its' share of suffering, all men suffer the wages of sin and that is death. The question we all need to wrestle with today is **who are you going to suffer for? Suffering for the world, gets you death and decay, suffering for Christ, gets you life and liberty – eternal life!** Not only that, but eternal life is just the tip of the iceberg, I haven't told you yet the benefits of the inheritance, the conditions wrapped around your inheritance.

[CHALLENGE/APPLICATION]

What do we actually inherit?

Hebrews 1:14 ESV

Are they not all **ministering spirits** sent out to **serve** for the sake of those who are to **inherit salvation**?

We actually inherit a **Secured Salvation**: it is ministered by angels, that is **God is directly** contributing to our ongoing sanctification, He will be the one that gets us all the way home (**Perseverance of the Saints**). We didn't do anything to get our Salvation, and we won't be the ones that make sure we keep it, that is His job, it's **part of our inheritance**. When God gives Salvation as an inheritance, He guarantees it with supernatural help.

1 Peter 1:4 ESV

3 (born again to a living hope) 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,

We actually inherit a **Sustained Salvation**, that is it begins now and will never end, and according to the text it doesn't fade, alluding to the power of it, the glory of it, you will never be bored of it, this too is part of your inheritance. When God gives Salvation as an inheritance it never loses its' new car smell.



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Revelation 3:21 ESV

The one who **conquers**, I will **grant him to sit with me on my throne**, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

We actually inherit a **Sublime Salvation**, that is what makes it so glorious is that our **eternal purpose** is to share this throne with Jesus, to **work for Him**, to take His won dominion and extend out over the cosmos. Ruling with and for Jesus is part of our inheritance. **When God gives Salvation as an inheritance it comes with eternal responsibility, that increases in glory, and sealed with the promise I will never lose it!**

So let me ask you this. Is it worth to suffer for the name of Christ, to get a guaranteed, secured, supreme, ever increasing, never fading, always fulfilling, inheritance, by which we get to make much of our eternal Father, and our reigning big brother our Lord Jesus?

For Paul it was a no brainier, look back at Romans 8.

Future Glory

¹⁸For I consider that the **sufferings of this present time** (are not worth comparing)
with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Is Paul speaking like politician, is he just making things up, what makes him the expert on suffering?

2 Corinthians 11:24-28 ESV

²⁴Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.
²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; ²⁷in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.



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Paul is stating here in Romans 8 that these present things (2 Cor.) are nothing compared to the glory that is still to come. Paul had seen the risen Christ, had believed by Faith what He had done for Him, and all Paul was doing now was, was **transfixing himself with love for Christ in his life**. Does love for Christ compel you as it did Paul? Because if you call yourself an heir in this room then you should realize the weight of the Gospel.

Ephesians 1:13 ESV

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

When we discover, when we accept that we were once orphans with nothing in value of ourselves, until God happened to come by, it changes your whole perception on life. Learning how truly magnificent He is and how eternally blessed we are forever changes you. If you are a child of God know this then, you are His eternal heir, and there is nothing in this world that compares to our future glory of living for Him. Let us give thanks and be eternally grateful for this amazing gift.

[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that has graciously chosen to love us, adopting us into His family once and for all.

Go in the name of the Son, that earned His inheritance by perfect obedience, and then shares it with us out of love for the family.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that has marked you with an eternal seal, establishing your name in heaven as a child of God, now go and share this good news with others.