

Pitiful People in Athens (Acts 17:16-31)

Gospel started in Jerusalem; passed the province of Asia; then through Philippi (gateway of Europe) and arrived in Athens where it was the birthplace of culture and the cradle of philosophy. Apostle Paul wanted to go to the province of Asia but instead God sent them to Europe. God's plan was to spread the Gospel to Greece and Rome where it was the center of the world at that time

God's thoughts not our thoughts "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55: 8-9) Suffering is not blessing in our thoughts but a path to blessings in God's thoughts. We will be pure in suffering, experience the grace of God when He fills our needs. We should bear the fruit. Bible says, if it does not bear fruit, then cut it down. When do we bear fruit? By looking at the power of Cross in our suffering and persecution. "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat (Psalms 127:1-2) We should believe that even though God's thought is different from ours in prayer. Faith means to live by God's thoughts instead of ours

Poor people in Athens - Gospel(Answer) "While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there (Acts 17:16-17) Athens was the city of culture and arts and with great philosophers. But Paul was distressed to see the city was full of idols. Though they tried to seek truth with humanistic philosophy, they could not find it (Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, idols, and superstition.) Two group of philosophers: Epicurean (Atheist - pursuits happiness or pleasure) and Stoic (Ascetic - emphasizing rational reason) both of them could not find the answer to two questions: Who we are? Where are we from and where are we heading for? "A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babblers trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection (Acts 17:18)

We are all sinners who can find out the answers: Blood of Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

Paul preached Gospel of God. (Viewpoint of God) "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. (Acts 17:24-25)

The view of life will be different according to our view of God.

1. **God is Creator who made the world /everything.** Confession of faith begin: "God created the heaven and the earth (Gen 1:1)
2. **Lord of heaven and earth** God reigns over and governs life and death.
3. **God does not live in temples built by human hands.** God is everywhere. God is in the church, our home and our heart.
4. **God is not served by human hands** We never can help God. Worship, praising, offering is for God? No. it is for us.
5. **God gives everyone life and breath and everything else.**
6. In God, we live and move and have our life, we are his offspring. Bible says that the fool says there is no God.

Paul testimonial: Resurrection of Jesus Christ. "For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead." When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject. (Acts 17:31-32)

Paul demands resolution. "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30)

1. **Repent** We should repent and preach Gospel when we know the Gospel; woe to us if we do not.
2. **This world is not forever(Judgement)** God set a day when he will judge the world with justice and he has given proof of this to everyone. Changed life with accepting Jesus would be proof in itself.

Response after Paul's speech. "When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." At that, Paul left the Council. Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others. (Acts 17:32-34) We are same: sneered or open ears; repenting heart and shamed with a torn heart - same Gospel. Apostle Paul introduced God to those who followed Greek philosophy.

How about us? Stop just knowing God and Let Us Experience the Living God who is the subject of our prayer, faith and love. And keep in mind that God's thoughts is not the same with our thoughts, rather believe in it that "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28) As believers, we should accept God's thoughts.