

GOD IS NOT FAR AWAY
“He is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27)

Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, was the patron saint of Athens. Those seeking for wisdom came to Athens and gathered at the Areopagus. Here these seekers of wisdom spent their time talking about and listening to the latest ideas. While these philosophers disputed with Paul about lesser ideas, he preached unto them the revolutionary truth about Jesus and the resurrection. A brief summary of his message is recorded in Acts 17:22-31.

Here are some of the highlights:

- Paul could tell they were religious because of their many objects of worship.
- Acts 17:16 states that **“the city was full of idols”**.
- In the midst of these “idols” Paul found an “altar” with this inscription **“to an unknown god”**.
- Please note that an “altar” is different from an “idol”!
- This “unknown god” was in a different category than the gods represented by “idols”.
- In fact, historians tell us this altar represented the worship of a God greater than all others!
- Paul wanted to tell them about this All Powerful God that they didn’t know.
- Paul reasoned with them that the God Who made the world and everything in it does not dwell in temples built by hands.
- The God who created the universe is all powerful and does not need our help to survive.
- God made all the people in every nation on earth from one blood. **“From one man (blood) he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though He is not far from each one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:26-28).** People from every race, as you know, can give and receive blood transfusions from one another.
- **“Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone – an image made by man’s design and skill. (Acts 17:29).**
- **“In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent. 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 all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).**
- When they heard of the resurrection of the dead:
 - Some sneered.
 - Others said “We want to hear you again on this subject”.
 - A few became followers of Paul and believed.
- **THEY NEEDED TO UNDERSTAND THAT GOD WAS NOT FAR AWAY FROM THEM!**
- **SO DO WE!**

GOD IS NOT ONLY NEAR, HE EVEN CALLS US BY NAME

“But now, this is what the Lord says – he who created you O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine” (Is. 43:1).

Our universe is so vast that our greatest astronomers do not know how many stars there are. Even more incredible is that they do not even know how many galaxies there are. Yet, God not only

numbers the stars, he has given every star a name: **“He determines the number of the stars and call them each by name” (Ps. 147:4)**. Since God knows the name of every star, He obviously knows your name!

- God called Moses by name (Ex. 3:4).
- God called Samuel by name (1 Sam. 3:4).
- God called Zachariah by name (Lk. 1:13).
- God gave new names to Abraham, Sarah, John the Baptist, Peter, and many others.
- God has also promised to give a new name to those who overcome (Rev. 2:17).
- God called Zacchaeus by name (Lk. 19:5).
- God called Saul of Tarsus by name (Acts 9:4).
- God called Cornelius by name (Acts 10:3).
- God called Barnabas and Saul by name to the work to which he called them (Acts 13:2).
- Etc.
- Your name is important to God! When the disciples of Jesus rejoiced that the demons were subject to them, Jesus said: **“However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Lk. 10:20)**.
- PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOUR NAME IS WRITTEN IN HEAVEN!

GOD IS NEAR TO US SO HE CAN PROTECT US FROM HARM AND EVIL

“Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God, he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge” (Ps. 62:5-8).

The disciples were never better off or safer than when they were near to Jesus! The three years they were following him were the happiest and best years of their lives. They were sad, of course, when Jesus said: **“Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later” (Jn. 13:36)**. Jesus promised, however, not to leave them like orphans (Jn. 14:18). Jesus promised that he would not leave them alone but would send them the Holy Spirit to be with them forever. God and Jesus, in the person of the Holy Spirit, would be their companion and “Counselor” and would teach them all things (Jn. 14:26).

God is the best friend we will ever have! Having Him near is not a burden! It is joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Pet. 1:8). He is a friend who sticks closer than a brother! (Prov. 18:24)

GOD EVEN NUMBERS THE HAIRS ON YOUR HEAD

Remember! **“God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (Jn. 3:17)**. Remember! **“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9)**.

The love of Jesus for His disciples is clear! Even though Jesus sent them out like sheep in the midst of wolves he promised to be with them. He told them: **“But when they arrest you, do not**

worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.” (Matt. 10:19-20). Jesus continued: **“Do not be afraid of those that kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows”** (Matt. 10:29-31). Jesus never expects us to suffer alone! He has promised to suffer with us! Praise God, if we suffer with him we will also reign with him (2 Tim. 2:12).

Jesus is so close to us that persecuting us is the same as persecuting Jesus! Remember these words of Jesus to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road: **“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”** (Acts 9:4) It is obvious that persecuting Christians is the same as persecuting Jesus!

Praise God! Jesus will never leave or abandon his followers. He has promised to be with us to the very end of the age. Jesus said: **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”** (Matt. 28:18-20).

TRULY JESUS WILL NEVER LEAVE US OR FORSAKE US (HEB. 13:5).

GOD IS NEAR SO HE CAN BE A VERY PRESENT HELP IN TROUBLE

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1). As long as God is near there is no reason to be afraid. It is thought that the 46th Psalm was composed to commemorate the deliverance of King Hezekiah from Sennacherib, the king of Assyria. The people of God were so outnumbered that the Assyrian field commander offered to give Hezekiah 2,000 horses if he could put riders on them (Is. 36:8). Hezekiah had nothing to worry about, however, for God is a very present help in trouble! On that occasion God sent an angel who killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in a single night (Is. 37:36).

This remarkable story is found three times in the Bible.

- 2 Ki. 18:1- 19:37).
- 2 Chron. 32:1-33.
- Is. 36:1- 37:38.

God is never too busy to hear your prayer and meet your needs! When Jeremiah was in trouble God told him: **“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know”** (Jer. 33:3). God can also do the same for you!

“Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save” (Is. 59:1)

GOD IS NEAR SO YOU WILL NOT BE TEMPTED BEYOND WHAT YOU CAN BEAR

“So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you do not fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1 Cor. 10:12-13).

God is so near that He can carefully monitor everything that happens to us. Because He loves us so much He will never allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear!

GOD IS EVERYWHERE

David said: **“Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast” (Ps. 139:7-10).**

This psalm also promises that:

- God searches us and knows us (vs. 1).
- God knows when we sit and when we stand (vs. 2).
- God knows our thoughts and is familiar with all our ways (vss. 2-3).
- God know what we are going to say before we say it (vs. 4).
- We cannot hide in the darkness for God causes the darkness to shine like the day (vss. 11-12).
- God even knew us before we were born (vss. 13-16).
- **OBVIOUSLY, SINCE GOD IS EVERYWHERE HE IS NOT FAR FROM EACH OF US!**

GOD IS NEAR SO WE CAN REACH OUT AND FIND HIM!

“He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:26-27).

Yes! God is near but he is also a jealous God (Ex. 20:5). God wants you to love Him with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mk. 12:30). God promises: **“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jer. 19:13).** Please do not be lukewarm in your search for God!

God is still so near to you, however, that you can always find Him if you really want to! Your search for God, however, involves faith!

The law of Moses involves “doing” while finding God involves “faith”. Paul makes this contrast clear. Moses said: **“The person who does these things will live by them.” But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**

For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” (Rom. 10:5-11).

GOD IS NEAR SO HE CAN TEACH US HOW TO DO HIS WORK

Jesus said: “Come unto me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

Jesus was not just the son of a carpenter (Matt. 13:55), he was himself a carpenter (Mk. 6:3). A 2,000 pound ox requires a different yoke than a 500 pound donkey. Jesus, of course, makes yokes that fit perfectly. He designs each yoke so that it was comfortable. Wearing his yoke is a pleasure for it makes the burden seem light. Working in the yoke Christ made for you will give you rest for your soul!

Jesus not only wants to be near you, He wants to be in the same yoke with you! He wants to be by your side and work with you! He wants you to learn from Him. There are many jobs that need to be done for the Lord, and Jesus can guide you to the very job that will bring you the greatest joy and satisfaction!

“This is what the Lord says: ‘Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,’ declares the Lord” (Jer. 9:23-24).

Please **“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while He is near” (Is. 55:6)**