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## **Onwards to Athens**

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

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Downtown Athens was a great place for gossip.

There were always people hanging around, natives and tourists alike, waiting for the latest titbit on anything.

So Paul took his stand in the open space just tried to say it as plain as he could

At the phrase "raising him from the dead," the listeners split: Some laughed at him and walked off making jokes; others said, "Let's do this again. We want to hear more."

But that was it for the day, and Paul left. There were still others, it turned out, who were convinced then and there, and stuck with Paul.

Three friends were discussing death and one asked the group: What would you like people to say about you at your funeral? The first said, "He was a great humanitarian, who cared about his community." The second wanted, "He was a great husband and father, who was an example for many to follow." The last man said, "At my funeral I want people to say, Look, he's moving!"

Every day many gathered in the town square to discuss religion and gods and what life means.

The crowd was made up of Epicureans (Life is short, ends in nothingness, so have a ball and avoid pain at all costs,) and the Stoics (Life is pain, God is in everything, and at the end I will be absorbed by God).

Neither group had a lot of good news to make life worthwhile.

Our day and culture aren't much different. Everywhere there are parties and empty faces. See the parties and pitiful people; see that there are no long-lasting, satisfying answers for the soul.

People Need Answers

Paul's heart was stirred by the lostness of people. Our hearts ought also to be stirred with the lostness.

We also see people living the Epicurean lifestyle, rejecting any kind of search for God, living for the party, the goods.

The surprising thing then (and now) is that while they were waiting for some NEW theory, Paul simply declared to them the OLD story, of Jesus, and His love.

Here, Paul said, was hope - genuine hope beyond sin, death and the grave. In Jesus there is life, abundant and eternal. They couldn't get beyond their sceptical, sophisticated, human knowledge.

But, just as some will scoff and turn away from eternal life, as always some will follow. Some always believe.