Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Needing God, Part 1
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-95

As I mentioned to you this morning, tonight I want to draw your attention to the 17th Chapter of the Book of Acts. And if you want to open your Bible to Act 17, particularly in Verse 22, we here find the Apostle Paul in the midst of the Areopagus. And he says in Verse 22, "Men of Athens, I observe that you're very religious in all respects. But while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription to an unknown god, 'What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.'"

Anybody who doesn't know God is in a desperate condition. Paul recognized that. And in fact, you man worship other than the true God. You may worship many gods. But if you do not worship the true God, you really are an atheist in the end. That's just how it works out. And if you do not worship the true God, you have cut yourself off from the very most important thing in all of life.

We live in a society that intellectually or ethically or pragmatically rejects God. There are religious societies that worship all kinds of non-gods, but not the true God. And theirs is another kind of religious atheism where they, too, are without the knowledge of God. The effect of this pervasive atheism is devastating, as we shall note in this introduction.

Let me begin with an account that comes out of a book entitled *A Shattered Visage*. It's a book written by Ravi Zacharias, who is a noted Christian apologist. Listen to how he begins the book: "On August 7, 1961, 26-year-old, Major Garmon Titofbecame the second Soviet Cosmonaut to orbit the earth and return safely, climaxing a monumental feat for mankind. Some time later, speaking at the World's Fair and savoring his moment of glory, he recounted this experience, vouchsafed to a privileged few. In a rather pre-textual pronouncement on a triumphilist note, he let it be known that on his excursion into space, he hadn't seen God.

"Upon hearing of his exuberant argument from silence, someone quipped, 'Had he stepped out of his space suit, he would have.'" *(Laughter)*"Evidently, reluctant to restrict the immediate gains of the moment to the disciplines directly involved in that endeavor, Titof attempted to draw theological blood. Thus, one great step for science became for him an immensely greater leap in philosophy.

"On Christmas Day, 1968, three American astronauts were the first human beings to go around the dark side of the moon away from the earth. Having fired their rockets, they were homebound on Apollo 8 and beheld our planet in a way that human eyes had never witnessed before. They saw

earthrise over the horizon of the moon, draped in a beauteous mixture of white and blue, bordered by the glistening light of the sun against the black void of space.

"And in the throws of this awe-inspiring experience, they opened the pages of the Book of Genesis and read for the world to hear, 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.'"

Writes Zacharias, "Two similar experiences of awe and exhilaration. Two diametrically opposed conclusions about the nature of the world. Such a chasm is quite understandable, for these two incidents carried into space the most fundamentally debated question on earth, 'Does God exist? Has God created man? Or has man created God? Is God indispensable to any cosmological explanation? Or is He only a psychological necessary of men? Theism or atheism?'"

Well, unfortunately, our culture is controlled by atheistic thinking. Several years ago, Encyclopedia Britannica published a 55-volume series entitled *The Great Books of the Western World*. Mortimer Adler, a very noted philosopher and legal scholar, was the co-editor of that series. And the series itself marshaled the most imminent thinkers of the Western World, and their writings on the most important ideas that had been studied and investigated over the centuries.

This includes ideas about law, science, philosophy, history, theology, and love that have shaped the minds and the destinies of people -- fifty-five volumes to assemble all of this for comparison and contrast. And very striking to anyone who observes these volumes is that the longest essay in all 55 volumes is under the title *God*.

When Mr. Adler was asked by a reviewer why this theme merited such protracted coverage, his answer was uncompromising, "It is because," he said, "more consequences for life follow from that one issue than from any other," end quote. Nothing has more direct impact on life. Nothing has more direct effect on life than belief or disbelief in God. Whether we're talking about personal life, family life, national life, or cultural destinies, everything in the human realm is bound up by whether we believe or do not believe in the true God.

And frankly, belief in the true God, who is creator and sustainer and lawgiver and judge and Savior and King, is essential to the wellbeing of humanity. And even believing in false gods, gods of man's on making is only a form of atheism, because those gods do not exist and cannot have any meaning.

Our culture, as I said to you last week, is dominated by intellectual atheism at high levels, and by moral atheism at low levels. GK Chesterton was right when he said, and I quote, "God is like the sun. You cannot look at it. But without it, you cannot look at anything else."

We are in profound trouble without God. The atheism of our time really goes back to evolution. It was when Charles Darwin and those who followed him designed the concept of evolution that

atheism took on a reasonableness. Although it is in every sense irrational and unreasonable, it has the faÃ§ade of reason.

Henry Morris has written a very excellent book called *The Long War Against God*. Henry Morris, of the Institution of Creation and Research, noted scientist, who came out of the scientific world and has written perhaps more than anyone arguing against evolution, writes this: "Modern astrophysicists are currently speculating that the universe itself spontaneously evolved out of nothing."

Well, at least they're honest enough to admit that's the only option, as irrational as it is. "Further," writes Morris, "in this picture the universe came into existence," this sounds very scientific, "as a fluctuation in the quantum mechanical vacuum." *(Laughter)*"Such a hypothesis leads to a view of creation in which the entire universe is an accident."

In the words of one writer, named Trion, and I quote -- a scientific writer, writing in the *Science Digest* , June 1984, "Our universe is simply one of those things that happened from time to time." *(Laughter)* Well, that explains it. *(Laughter)*

This evolutionary lie, this elimination of God permeated everything. It permeates education. It permeates law, the courts, government, politics, sociology, morality, all areas of human life and endeavor, all areas of human relationship are polluted by the evolutionary lie. And evolution led almost sequentially to the worst in human life.

If you go back to the worst in human life, the worst from a sociological standpoint, you have to go back to Karl Marx and the writing of *Das Kapital*, atheistic communism's birthing philosophy. And you might not know it, but it is true that Karl Marx sought to dedicate *Das Kapital*to Charles Darwin.

When you go back to Sigmund Freud, you go back to a man who was so enamored with evolution he believed he had found the reality he needed, that man had to solve his own problems within himself because there was nobody outside. There was no God. Freud took the evolutionary concepts of Darwin and developed psychology from them.

Arrogant pseudo intellectual behaviorists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and philosophers who have come from Freud and Marx and their disciples have given us the world we have today; psychologists and psychiatrists and philosopher who have far more personal problems than is even reasonable for any single group. They even recognize how messed up they are, how corrupt they are, and how crippled they are.

Peter Brigenis a psychiatrist in the *Humanist Journal*November/December 1987; he wrote an article called *Mental Health and Religion*. This is what he said -- he is a psychiatrist: "The average psychiatrist has more power to do harm in the lives of individuals than most religious leaders on

earth. Moreover, it would be hard to find a more unhappy lot than those clustered in the mental health field.

"Especially among psychiatrists, suicide, depression, drug addiction, and alcoholism are notoriously rife. Among non-medical mental health professionals," that would be psychologists and counselors, et cetera, "the situation doesn't seem much better. Not only are many mental health professionals unhappy, but they do not live ethically inspired lives. Too many, for example, prostrate themselves before the psychiatric establishment," end quote.

And yet, these same psychologists who are unhappy, embittered people who can't solve the problems of their own lives, yet the lives of others who are following this evolutionary Freudian union model are sure that the answer is not in Christianity.

Dr. Edward Wilson of Harvard, former southern Baptist in his early years, now having rejected all of that, also wrote an article in *The Humanist Journal*called *The Relation of Science to Theology*. And in it, Dr. Wilson said this, and I quote, "Bitter experience has taught us that fundamentalist religion," that means Christianity as we know it, "in its aggressive form is one of the unmitigated evils of the world," end quote.

They have not only rejected God and rejected religion and rejected fundamentalist Christianity, but they see it as a serious threat.

In another strain, you can go back to the philosopher, Nietzsche, who coined the idea that God is dead. Nietzsche was the one who, more than anybody else, influenced Joseph Stalin, Adolph Hitler, and Benito Mussolini. For example, Adolph Hitler took Nietzsche and ran the philosophy of Nietzsche to its logical conclusion. He drove the atheistic worldview to the very brink.

And Hitler said this, and I quote, "I have freed Germany from the stupid and degrading fallacies of conscience and morality."

Dostoyevsky, the Great Russian writer, was exactly accurate when he said, "If God is dead, everything is justifiable." There's no right and there's no wrong. There's no explanation for the universe, because it doesn't need one. It is just one of those things that happen from time to time. There is no hope. There is no meaning.

An English journalist by the name of Steve Turner sums it up in a very clever way. Listen to what he wrote. "We believe in Marx, Freud, and Darwin. We believe everything is okay as long as you don't hurt anyone, to the best of your definition of hurt, and to the best of your knowledge. We believe in sex before, during, and after marriage.

"We believe in the therapy of sin. We believe that adultery is fun. We believe that sodomy's okay. We believe that taboos are taboo. We believe that everything's getting better despite evidence to the contrary. The evidence must be investigated, and you can prove anything with evidence. We believe there's something in horoscopes, UFOs, and bent spoons. Jesus was a good man, like Buddha, Mohammad, and ourselves.

"He was a good moral teacher, although we think His good morals were bad. We believe that all religions are basically the same, at least the one that we read was. They all believe in love and goodness. They only differ on unimportant matters like creation, sin, Heaven, Hell, God, and salvation." *(Laughter)*

"We believe that after death comes nothing, because when you ask the dead what happens, they say nothing." *(Laughter)*"If death is not the end, if the dead have lied, then it's compulsory Heaven for everybody except perhaps Hitler, Stalin, and Genghis Khan. We believe in Masters and Johnson. What's selected is average. What's average is normal. What's normal is good. We believe in total disarmament. We believe there are direct links between warfare and bloodshed." That's deep. *(Laughter)*

"Americans should beat their guns into tractors, and everybody else would be sure to follow. We believe that man is essentially good. It's only his behavior that lets him down." *(Laughter)*"This is the fault of society. Society is the fault of conditions. Conditions are the fault of society. We believe that each man must find the truth that is right for him. Reality will adapt accordingly.

"The universe will readjust. History will alter. We believe there is no absolute truth, excepting the truth that there is no absolute truth. We believe in the rejection of creeds, and the flowering of individual thought."

He then concluded with a postscript. He called it *Chance*. This is what it says: "If chance be the father of all flesh, disaster is his rainbow in the sky. And when you hear, 'State of emergency. Sniper kills ten. Troopers on rampage. Whites go looting. Bomb blasts school,' it's but the sound of man worshiping his maker." Very true. If you don't have God, you don't have anything.

As Pascal said, "There is a God-shaped vacuum in man that only He can fill." And apart from God, there's no sense to anything. There's no life. There's no hope. There's no goodness. There's no meaning. There's no truth. There's no rules.

Well, moving into a little more familiar domain, on January 7, 1855, Charles Haddon Spurgeon addressed his congregation at New Park Street Church. This is what he said: "Would you lose your sorrow? Would you drown your cares? Then go plunge yourself in the godhead's deepest sea. Be

lost in the immensity and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul, so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief, so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout faith in God."

We need God in our society and in our lives. Today we're gonna hear about God from a far greater preacher than Spurgeon or me, from the Apostle Paul himself. And that brings us to Act 17. This is a message about God, that men must know and can know God. That's what it's about. How important is it?

John 17:3 sums it up. Listen to these words. "And this is life eternal that they may know Thee, the only true God." Knowing God is the way to eternal life. How important is knowing God? It is the only way to eternal life. It is the only escape from eternal death.

What is the best thing in life? What is the most comforting thing in life? What is the most securing thing in life? What is the most hope-producing thing in life? What is the profoundest truth in life? What is the greatest source of courage in life wherein lies the standard for living, for knowing what is right and what is wrong? All of it is in the knowledge of God.

In Jeremiah 9, it is wonderfully summed up. Listen to Verses 23 and 24 of Jeremiah 9: "Thus says the Lord, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches. But let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me," what a great statement, "that I am the Lord who exercises loving kindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,' declares the Lord."

If you're gonna boast, you don't boast about your wisdom. You don't boast about your power. You don't boast about your riches. You boast in one thing, that you understand and know God.

I will never forget as long as I live, I'm sure, sitting on that airplane -- and I told you about this months ago -- flying down to El Paso, Texas, starting up a conversation with a Muslim Arab from the Middle East. And he started asking me questions. And I said to him, "I know God," and it blew his mind. He said, "You know the God personally?"

Why would you boast of your human might and your human achievement and your human wisdom and your earthly riches, when you can boast that you know the God of the universe personally? And He provides the structure for all that you believe and know to be true. What pleases God most? He delights that we know Him.

Hosea 6:6: "For I desired mercy and not sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." And what is the purpose of man? To know God, to glorify God, to enjoy Him. Paul knew well the plight of the Pagans. They didn't know God. Though they were religious, they didn't know

God. Theirs was not technically a world of atheism. Theirs was not a world of evolution. They believed in gods all over the place, but not the true God.

As we find the Apostle Paul in Acts 17, he's on his second tour from the church in Antioch where he was a pastor -- Antioch in the country of Syria. He has come to Macedonia and he's come there to found those churches at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. But in each case, while he was establishing churches in those cities, great opposition broke out. And every time, he had to run to save his own life because the false religious establishment and, of course, that included the Jews and the Pagans, were threatened so severely by the establishment of the Gospel and the church that Paul had to run for his life.

From Berea, which was the last of those three stops in Macedonia, he had been brought to Athens. And he came to Athens alone, waiting until Timothy and Silas, his companions on this missionary tour, could join him. So there he is in Athens. And I suppose it was everybody's intent that he would rest because he had been so embattled that he would get some refreshment and find some comfort and some quiet. But he didn't.

In fact, as soon as he got to Athens, he confronted a city completely given over to idolatry, and the consequent inequity that came with it. He was impressed that the city was full of idols, but without God. It was atheism couched as polytheism. He was all alone. How could he have an impact on that place?

Well, the way things worked in ancient times, there was an agura, a marketplace. And there would be a gathering of the populace of the people in that marketplace. And part of that gathering city center would be a place given over to the articulation of philosophy and religion. And so that's where Paul went.

The discussion of philosophy and theology and religion was in the public forum. It wasn't tucked into neat books and stuck on shelves somewhere. It didn't take place in private debates on television or radio; it was public. And so he went to the public place where he could meet the philosophers.

He stood in the middle of the Areopagus. That probably means "the council." They would be the supreme court of Athens. He went there and asked for a hearing. And by the way, that is the very court, the supreme court of Athens, called the Areopagus, that tried Socrates and condemned him about four centuries before.

Paul comes back to that very familiar place, to the inhabitants of Athens, where much had been argued and debated through the centuries, since Socrates. He is not there to defend a personal philosophy. He's not there to get in line with all the rest of the philosophers. He is there to introduce the Pagans to God, to the only true God whom they do not know.

And he has to start by finding some way to enter the subject. And so he says, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects." And there's a certain amount of condescension in that, a certain amount of bridge building in that. "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription to an unknown God." How perfectly suited that oblique, obscure, nondescript altar to nobody was in becoming the entry point for Paul to make his great sermon.

The title of his sermon might be *Getting to Know the Unknown God*. Now there are three things that must be known if we're to know God. One, we have to know that God is. Two, we have to know who God is; and three, what God requires. If we're gonna know Him, we have to know that He is, know who He is, and what He requires for those who would know Him.

So in Verses 22 and 23, Paul essentially says, "I'm going to introduce to this God." Hebrew 11:6 says, "He that comes to God must believe that He is." let me tell you something, folks, as long as people are atheistic, intellectual atheists, materialistic atheists, naturalist atheists, humanistic atheists, and will not acknowledge that God is, they cannot know Him at all.

The paper fortresses of atheism, the paper fortress of atheism have to be torn down. They can be torn down. From the intellectual standpoint, it is reasonable to believe in God. Romans 1. But even more importantly, they can be torn down by the revelational argument of Scripture. Let the Scripture do its powerful, powerful work.

In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul says, "We do not war according to the flesh." Now we're gonna do battle in an atheistic environment and an atheistic culture. And if you're on a university campus, it's even more heightened there. But we don't do battle according to the flesh. We're not just using human reason and human arguments and human debate, because the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of the paper fortresses of atheism.

How are you gonna tear down these paper castles, these paper fortresses? How are you gonna destroy speculation and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God? How are you going to do that and then bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ? The only way you can do that is with a spiritual weapon. And the only spiritual weapon we have is the Word of God.

That is why I am much more concerned with confronting the atheistic culture with the Scripture than I am with rational arguments. There's a place for that. But in the end, the spiritual weapon that rips down their fortresses is the Word of the Living God, energized by the Spirit of God.

In Psalm 14:1, familiar words, "The fool has said in his heart," what? "There is no God." The word "fool," by the way, could also be translated wicked, or even vicious. The root of that word, "fool," can

refer to a plant that has lost all of its juice. So it could even be translated, "lifeless, drying, dry." The lifeless one, the wicked, vicious, foolish, lifeless one, shriveled up, dried up, is the one who says in his heart, "There is no God."

He says it in his heart. He's convinced himself inside. And I just remind you that men don't do that because it is intellectually reasonable. They do it because they love their sin. And if they acknowledge God, then they have to acknowledge morality, and then have to feel guilty because they violate it. They don't want that. They want to eliminate the guilt. They want to be free to sin as they will. And so they just eliminate God. They love sin. They shun accountability to a divine law.

And Athens, like the people of the Psalmists time, and like people today, it was full of fools who ran around saying, "There's no God." Athens had created all kinds of gods to accommodate their inequity, but not the true God. Rejection of the true God is not a result of superior intellect. It is not a result of scientific investigation. It is a result of stupidity. And more than that, it is a result of the love of inequity.

And it is summed up in Romans 1 where it says, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." God planted the knowledge of His existence in creation. God planted the knowledge of His existence reason. the knowledge of Law is planted in thought and in conscience so that even Pagans, who have no written Scripture can discern that God exists, that God is powerful, that God is supernatural, that God has established a Law and judgment.

In fact, this revelation of God that is in man is so clear that every man is without excuse for rejecting God. The Ephesians, while very religious, were really atheists because they refused the true God. They did not know the true God. And so, they didn't know God at all. At least though, we could say they were supernaturalists. By virtue of their religion, they allowed for the existence of supernatural beings. And they were at least open to the fact that that was reality.

And Paul builds on that. He stood in the midst of the Areopagus. They got that name because they once met on the hill of Aries. And he says, "You men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects." And by the way, I suppose that could be taken as a compliment. I don't think he's being snide or caustic. But he's certainly being vague. He wants to say something that is at least kind. And they were very religious.

Posineoushad written that the Athenians greatly surpassed others in their zeal for religion. Lucian had said, "On every side, there are altars, victims, temples, and festival." One of their writers, Petroneous, said, "It is easier to find a god in Athens than a man." They were addicted to the worship of their gods, but they didn't know the true God.

So just in case some deity got left out of their pantheon they made an altar to an unknown god. Now it's true from what we know historically and through archeology, that this would not be the only such altar. In fact, it is very likely that all over the City of Athens there were many, many altars to many, many unknown gods. They just wanted to make sure they scooped up every possibility.

Maybe there was just one other god out there. And if he didn't get recognized, he'd really get upset and then some disaster would come. And maybe there was one god out there that they didn't know yet who could fix the world. They sure hadn't found one who could up to this point. Six hundred years, by the way, before this, a terrible pestilence had hit the City of Athens and nothing could stop it.

A cretin poet, Epimedities, had come up with a plan. A flock of black and white sheep were let loose throughout the city from the Areopagus. Wherever each lay down, it was sacrificed to the nearest god; that the sheep that would lie down it would be sacrificed to the nearest god. If a sheep was lying down near no shrine, it would be sacrificed to an unknown god, and an altar to an unknown god would be built there. And maybe there was some deity floating around somewhere who could fix the world. This may have been one such altar.

Sad, all those gods and they're still without God. The love of sin had obliterated the truth. If they had desired to know the truth, they would have known the truth. Paul makes that clear when he says in Verse 27, that, "They should seek God, perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He's not far from each one of us." In Him, we live and move and exist.

God was there, in its presence, not far away to their understanding if only they had sought Him properly. But they loved their sin and so they created a panoply of deities to accommodate their own ignorance and their own inequity. Paul uses this as a springboard to introduce them to the true God.

We certainly live in a culture that on the one hand is intellectually atheistic and morally atheistic, but on the other hand, has a faÃ§ade of religion. And if you surveyed most of the people in America, they would believe in God or gods, as they would define them in their own human terms. In the midst of all of this practical atheism and all of this whimsical theism, they don't know the true God. And when a society doesn't know the true God, all Hell breaks loose.

And Paul then realizes how crucial it is for the heart of the individual to come to know the true God. And in Verse 23 he says, "I found this altar with the inscription to an unknown God." And then he adds this tremendous statement, and it must have grabbed their hearts, "What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. I'm gonna tell you about the unknown God. I'm gonna tell you about this God that you've hoped was there, this God who can save you from your sins, this God who can give you peace and joy, this God who shows you what is right and what is wrong, who tells you how to live your life and gives you hopes for the future."

It is recorded that wistfully Albert Einstein, a man with an intellect hardly surpassed in our nation's history, Albert Einstein said, "There is a cosmic power. Not to believe that is foolish. But we could never know it." Oh yes, we can. That is the same dilemma of many people. "There is a God out there. They may be a God out there. If there is a God out there, how can we know Him and how can He touch our lives?"

And Paul simply starts by saying, "What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. The God you need is there. God is," that's his first point. "God exists. The God that you so desperately need exists."

Listen to Paul's writing to the Galatians in Chapter 4, Verses 8 and 9. A powerful statement. He says to the Galatians Christians, "At that time when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. You had your gods. You had your deities. But you didn't know God. But now," Verse 9, "that you have come to know God," rather a better way to say it, "to be known by God, how is it that you turned back again to the weak and worthless elemental things to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?" And he's castigating them because they've come to know the true God, to be known by the true God, and they're drifting back to some of their former Pagan habits.

But the point that I want to draw out of that is that God can be known. And when you come to know Him, and He to know you, there's no need to ever go back. God is, and God is knowable. That is the message of Scripture. We could go into all kinds of reasonable arguments, the existence of God from the standpoint of cause and effect, of design, of personality, of ethics, of law, of conscience, all of those things. But in the end, the real weapon is the Word of God. That's what tears down the atheistic fortresses. God is, and God is knowable.

And secondly, they had to recognize who God is, not just that God is and that he is knowable, but who God is. Paul, knowing that to believe God is, and even to believe that He is knowable is incomplete. You have to identify who He is.

You have heard people speak of God as "the man upstairs," "the big man in the sky," one Hollywood personality said. "The man upstairs," is a common identification for God. But who is God? Well, it's not hard to figure out, because God has revealed Himself.

And Paul speaks directly and authoritatively in declaring who God is. And when he does that, he stabs right at the heart of atheism. He stabs right at the heart of polytheism. He stabs also right at the heart of Athenian pride. He stabs at the heart of social and racial superiority. He puts God at the center of the universe instead of man, and eliminates all other deities. His goal is to lead them to God.

Now let's pick it up in Verse 24. Here's how he introduces God. "The God who made the world and all things in it." First of all, you want to know who God is? God is creator. God is creator. He is the one who made the world and all things in it. Now they were living, obviously, in a pre-evolutionary era. Nobody had concocted anything as stupid as that the universe came out of nothing. Human reason wouldn't even permit it.

Because the human mind operates on a cause and effect premise, every effect requires a cause. That took them back to the greatest effect, which is the universe, which demanded a cause. And Paul says, "The cause is God." First of all, you want to know who God is. He is the creator who made the world and all things in it.

Now, this is very interesting if you get a little bit deeper into the philosophy that existed in Athens. There were a group of philosophers there known as Epicureans. They denied creation. You know how they denied creation? They didn't believe in evolution. They said matter was eternal. Matter was eternal. It never was created, so it didn't need a creator. That's how they solved the problem.

Stoics, the other major philosophical group, were Pantheists. And they said, "Everything is God. And God is everything," which, I suppose, is another way of saying the same thing. Paul says, "The eternal God is the creator of everything. There was creation and God made creation; therefore, God is not the creation, He is the creator."

The Scripture certainly affirmed this, and we could spend literally hours trekking through the Word of God affirming that God, Himself, is the creator. But listen, for example, to Psalm 146:5, "How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God." Now if I'm gonna have a God to help me, and if I'm gonna have a God in whom to put my eternal hope, there's the God I want, the one who made Heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them. I want the creator, because I want a God of great power.

The wonderful profit, Isaiah, in that great section of his prophesy, when he's talking about the character of God, for example, the 40th Chapter of Isaiah, Verse 12, "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand and marked off the heavens by the span, and calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, and weighed the mountains in a balance in the hills in a pair of scales?"

He's talking about God, the creator measuring the water, marking off the heavens, calculating the dust of the earth, weighing the mountains. That's the science of Isosticy that makes the earth balanced so it rotates properly, the creator, God.

Over in the 45th Chapter of Isaiah, again another reference, and there are many of these, in Verse 18, "For thus says the Lord who created the heavens. He is the God who formed the earth and made it.

He established it and didn't create it a waste place. 'I am the Lord and there is no one else.'" And so it goes again and again in Scripture, God is seen as the creator.

Zachariah 12:1, "thus declares the Lord who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within Him."

Read Jeremiah 10. Read Jeremiah 32, on and on. Matter is not eternal. And matter is not God. The Epicureans were wrong. The Stoics were wrong. God is God, and He created, and what He created is not Him, but His creation.

This basic truth of Christianity overthrows the claims of evolution. And by the way, evolution, of course, is indefensible anyway. One writer, name Kiercutsays -- and this sort of sums it up -- "All evolutionary presuppositions are unsupported." Pretty comprehensive statement.

When you think about what the evolutionists have tried to say for over 100 years, the nebula theory on creation was accepted. And then it was discarded for the title theory, which gave way to the continual controversy between the steady state and superdense theories, then for 1,500 years, the Ptolemaic theory, then the Copernican theory, then the theory of relatively, then the big bang theory. And now they've got some kind of theory developed by Stephen Hawking, the negative vacuum theory. And on and on it goes.

And what is the faith of the evolutionists? Here it is: "No supernatural exists. No supernatural power created. All creation is a matter of chance. Living matter comes from dead matter. Intelligence, conscience, and moral judgment appear with no source and no cause." Sure.

The laws of thermodynamics, for one thing, show the opposite to be true. So Paul introduces the creator. But the Athenians really did not have a problem with believing in a first cause. If they weren't Epicureans and they had it all a mind, they knew there had to be a cause for that effect. And so he starts by saying, "God is creator. You want to know God? You start there. He's the creator."

Secondly, who is God? He is ruler. It says in Verse 24 that the God, who made the world and all things in it, is also Lord of Heaven and earth. He is the sovereign. He is the ruler. He is in charge of everything. Genesis 14 calls Him, "God most high, possessor of Heaven and earth." Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord and all that is in it." He is proprietor, sustainer of Heaven and earth. He rules over everything. He is a universal king over the whole universe.

In fact, is nowhere better stated than in Daniel 4:34 and 35. You remember Nebuchadnezzar had imagined himself to be much more powerful than he really was. And, of course, God punished him severely. And finally, after seven years, he came to his senses. And at the end of that period -- Verse 34 of Daniel 4, "I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward Heaven," after living like a wild

beast with his hair growing long and his fingernails like bird's claws and eating grass and having the dew on his body, this great king. He finally came back to his senses and he said, "I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever."

And then he goes on to describe Him, "for His dominion is an everlasting dominion and His Kingdom endures from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounts as nothing. But He does, according to His will in the host of Heaven. And among the inhabitants of earth, and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What hast Thou done?' He is absolutely sovereign."

"We're talking," says Paul, "about the God who is the creator and the ruler. He is in charge of absolutely everything. He made it. He rules is. He determines its destiny. Such a God who is the creator and the ruler of the universe," listen, "is beyond the bounds of the physical."

Verse 24, "He does not dwell in temples made with hands." 1 Kings 8:27 says, "Heaven and the highest Heaven cannot contain Thee." He is a God that is way beyond the boundaries of time and space. Therefore, man cannot discover Him. Man can't leave a time/space world. God, Himself must reveal who He is. God is beyond the bounds of the physical.

Psalm 139 is an irresistible Psalm in this context, and we shared it this morning. It says in Verse 7, "Where can I go from Thy spirit? Where can I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend to Heaven, Thou art there. If I make my bed in Sheol, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Thy hand will lead me and Thy right hand will lay hold of me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness will overwhelm me and the light around me will be night, even the darkness is not dark to Thee, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to Thee. Thou didst form my inward parts. Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb." There's nowhere to go. There's nowhere that you can escape God.

He transcends the boundaries of the physical. No matter where you go, He's there. You cannot confine Him. You cannot contain Him. You can't put a building around Him. You can't confine Him to an altar. He is beyond all of that. In fact, idolatry consists not only in the worship of false gods, but attempting to confine the true God in some idol or some temple.

Any image of God corrupts the immensity of God. That's why John Calvin said, "A true image of God is not found in all the world." "To whom will you liken God?" asks Isaiah in Chapter 40, Verse 18, "What likeness will you compare to Him?" There's nothing that you can make that represents God, nothing.

God can't be worshiped in shrines. He can't be worshiped on altars. He can't be worshiped in statues. He's far too vast for that. Who is God? He is creator, and He is sovereign of the universe.

Listen folks, He made everything and He is in charge of it. He makes the rules. He calls the shots. He determines destiny. There's something more about Him, and this is quite amazing. Verse 25, "Neither is He served by human hands as though He needed anything." He is not only creator, not only ruler, but He is independent. He doesn't need us. He's not dependent on us for anything. We are, on the other hand, depend on Him for what? Everything.

Job 22:2 asks an interesting question. I don't know if you ever read it there. It says, "Can a man be profitable to God?" And the implied answer is, "No, what does God need?" You don't bring any benefit to God. You don't do for Him. He doesn't need anything done for Him.

You see, the Pagans believed that -- and that's probably what Job had in mind -- the ancient Pagans believed that the gods were somehow fed and nourished by offerings. Go down here to the Buddhist Temple, what do they do with all that food? They stick all that food in front of that fat Buddha. *(Laughter)*There's nobody home, folks. *(Laughter)*And then when it all rots, they throw it away. They're not feeding a god. They're not nourishing anything. There's nobody there. That's a nothing. That's an absolute zero. That's nothing. And they worship nothing. And they worship no one.

But the true God doesn't ever want to be worshiped in any way like that, as if we needed to feed Him or nourish Him. He is independent. Or we could say, "He is self-contained, self-fulfilled."

In Psalm 50:9, "I am God, your God," He says in Verse 7. "I do not reprove you for your sacrifices, and your burnt offerings are continually before me. I shall take no young bull out of your house, no male goats out of your fold. For every beats of the forest is Mine. The cattle on 1,000 hills, I know every bird on every mountain. And everything that moves in the field is Mine. If I were hungry, I wouldn't tell you. For the world is mine and all it contains. What do I need from you?"

God doesn't need anything from us. He is self-contained, self-fulfilled, independent. But there's something else about Him. He is a giver. He's creator, ruler, self-sustained, and a giver. I love this. Verse 25, "He, Himself, gives to all life and breath and all things." He doesn't take. He only, what? Gives.

This is the true God we're talking about here. This is the true God. He is a giver, not a taker. And what does He give? Life. Life. And where does life start? *[Laughs)*Somewhere down in a protein molecule made up of 3,000 atoms. God is author of all of it.

God is called twice in the Book of Numbers. The God of the spirits of all flesh. The God of the spirits of all flesh. That is, He makes everything live that lives. Boy, now we're really starting to know God, aren't we? He's the creator. He's the ruler, self-contained, and the giver.

Well, I want to say more about that, but time is gone. I thought this would happen. *(Laughter)*We'll pick it up next time. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we thank You that You have revealed Yourself to us in Your Word. We thank You that we can know who You are, that we can know the one who created everything, the one who possesses, controls, and rules everything, the one who doesn't need us, because He has no needs.

And yet, we can know You as a giver of life and breath and all things. Father, we thank You that we have come to know You in the only way possible through the Lord, Jesus Christ. and our hearts are broken, Lord, as we look at this society around us who don't know You, atheists of all kinds, some rational intellectual, naturalistic, humanistic, materialistic, atheists at the high levels, and then those ethical atheists at the lowest level, those moral atheists who live as if there is no God, and then in the middle all of those religious atheists who worship the wrong gods or the right one in the wrong way, and thus, miss You completely.

Father, this nation, this world needs You. We need God; otherwise, we don't know why we're here. We don't know where we're going. We don't know what the rules are. We don't know what the truth is. We have no hope, no joy, no peace, no fulfillment, no meaning, no nothing.

But with You, we have everything, absolutely everything. How frightening the thought that all there is is chance. And chance is the father of all flesh, and disaster is His rainbow in the sky. How frightening. How comforting to know that you are the true God and that You are working history to Your own glory and the benefit of all those who know You.

How our hearts are filled with hope and gratitude. Lord, may we bring the truth of You to this religious and atheistic society, not unlike those Athenians with their many gods and not the true one, with all the wrong explanations and all the accommodations to their inequity and facing only hopelessness, meaninglessness, and damnation.

Our hearts grieve when we think about the millions of people who have been ground to powder in the evolutionary gears, who have fallen victim to the lies of Darwin and Freud and Karl Marx, and Hitler, and Mussolini, and Stallan, and Niche. How their philosophies even to this day pervade so much thinking in the world.

How we grieve that the elite among the scientists seek fundamental Christianity as one of the greatest evils of our time because it threatens their lifestyle. But, oh Lord, we would ask that you would allow us the privilege to proclaim the true and living God in the various Areopagus of this world in which we live. That we may, with the us of the revelation of You Word, tear down the paper fortresses that are lifted up by the vein speculation of human ideologies, and bring people to the

knowledge of the true and living God.

Oh, what joy is found in knowing You, what satisfaction, what peace, what hope, what comfort, what security. Like Spurgeon said, "If you would find joy, lose yourself in the sea of God's immensity." And there we find our comfort and our peace, our hope, our direction.

We think of the testimonies of these precious young people tonight who know You and whose life has such meaning, such value, such hope, such direction, and will be filled with such blessing and richness. We pray that for every soul.

We ask that You would work in the hearts of those who do not know You, to bring them the knowledge of the truth found only in Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen.

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