

# Five Qualities of God That You Don't Want to Miss

By Doug Hamilton

## Paul's Initial Arrival in Athens

Paul was fleeing from the Judaizers of northern Greece, being forced to rush from Philippi for preaching the gospel of Christ. Not long after, he again was forced to flee for the same reason from Thessalonica. He found relief for a short time in Berea, but once again had to take flight from the troublemakers.

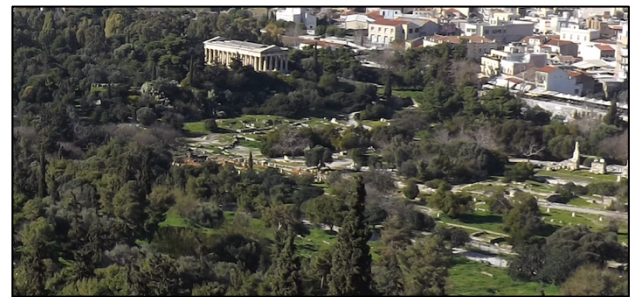
Taking a ship down the western coast of Greece, Paul likely caught a glance of a hundred-foot coastal hill called Sunion, which sported the ancient temple of Poseidon. This Greek god of the seas would be just a sample of what the apostle would experience upon his arrival to the Athens.



*The Temple of Poseidon atop of Sunion.*

Acts 17:16-18, Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols. <sup>17</sup> So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing *Gentiles*, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. <sup>18</sup> And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, “What would this idle babbler wish to say?” Others, “He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

Athens was a city “full of idols” and heavy on idolatry. They worshipped everything and anything under the sun. Besides the worship of the Greek gods, they also were willing to venerate their ancient philosophers and noble citizens that passed on. Some have estimated that there were thousands of these idols within the city. The sculptures and altars associated with them would have lined the streets that Paul walked. The apostle had never encountered such a polytheistic society as this, provoking him to his core.



*The location of the ancient market place of Athens.*

Naturally, according to Paul's custom, he sought out a local synagogue to begin spreading the message of Jesus Christ. He looked for anyone who was willing to reason the God of the scriptures in hope that they found His Son Jesus Christ. While in the market place, some observers, less than a couple hundred feet away and atop a large stone hill called the Areopagus, noticed that Paul had accumulated quite a following. They were known as the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, who spent their days on the hill, publicly reasoning the existence of the ancient god-system. A closer examination of each group would prove to be enlightening to the context of the passage.

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- 1) Epicurean: They followed the philosopher Epicurus, who taught that pleasure was the highest end of living. Other teachings they embraced was that matter was eternal with no creator, no afterlife and no judgment in an afterlife.
- 2) Stoics: They followed the teachings of the philosopher Zenos. They taught the world was created by Zeus, that self-denial is the source of happiness and that all things were defined by fate.

They were about as polar-opposite as possible in their debates reflected it. They were equally passionate about being out in front of the populace to demonstrate their wisdom and be admired by men. Naturally, when they saw Paul had gathered a large crowd, they demanded to investigate.

### Changing the Venue to Mars Hill

Act 17:19-21, And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? “For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean.”<sup>21</sup> (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)



*The Areopagus (Mar's Hill) on the left and the marketplace on the right.*

They invited Paul to the larger and more affluent forum to debate with the populace about the hope in Christ. The place was called the Areopagus: Ares = Mars + Pagos = Hill, hence Mars Hill. It was the place that the supreme court of Athens would meet to hear important cases and issues of the gods. Apparently, what Paul was speaking about in the market place was elevated, both figuratively and literally to the highest platform.

### The Gospel Sermon of Mars Hill

Acts 17:22- 23 So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.<sup>23</sup> “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.’ Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

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Paul was already impressed with the polytheistic nature of the culture, so it was no surprise to see him begin with the common-ground of “very religious”, even to the point of an altar inscribed as “TO AN UNKNOWN GOD”. The Athenians were so serious about worshipping their gods and idols that just in case they missed one, why not have an altar for it? The Athenians made daily sacrifices to their altars, likely including this one as well. In this way they were worshipping in ignorance, for the anonymous god was yet to be discovered and named, but already worshipped.



*Dionysius, the god of wine, one of the many gods worshipped in ancient Athens.*

### The Core Sermon for the Athenians

Acts 17:24-31 “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; <sup>25</sup> nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things; <sup>26</sup> and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, <sup>27</sup> that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; <sup>28</sup> for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’ <sup>29</sup> “Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. <sup>30</sup> “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, <sup>31</sup> because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

We must remember this is Luke’s summary of Paul’s case for Christ while preaching in Athens, not the entire hearing which took place. Luke was captured the essence of what was being argued by the apostle to the group that day. From what we do have, there were five revealed primary truths about God which were communicated by Paul. They are five qualities of God which are necessary to understand about Him as a basis of a healthy relationship.

### Five Qualities of God that were Communicated

#### 1) God is Omnificent.

The word OMNIFICENT refers to God’s creation ability as demonstrated in Genesis chapter one. Paul would establish this early on with the debaters on Mars Hill, for it is the core of our Christian being.

- The God of Paul is credited with designing the universe and all things therein. 17:24, “The God who made the world and all things in it...”
- The God of Paul is credited for the invention of life. 17:25, “He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things...”
- The God of Paul is credited with allowing all mankind to exist. 17:26, “...and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth...”
- Romans 1:20, “...For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen...”

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- Psalm 19:1, The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.
- Psalm 139:14, I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well.

### 2) God is Omnipotent.

The word OMNIPOTENT means having supreme power over all. Paul was very clear with the idol worshipping religious seekers that God was in control and answered to nobody

- The God of Paul is not limited to residing in a temple. 17:24, “...*does not dwell in temples made with hands...*”
- The God of Paul is not in need of anything from man. 17:25, “...*nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything...*”
- The God of Paul cannot be encompassed in an idol. 17:29, “...*we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.*”
- The God of Paul will judge the entire world for their sins. 17:31, “...*He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world...*”
- Isaiah 40:25, “To whom then will you liken Me That I would be *his* equal?” says the Holy One.
- Job 42:2, “I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.
- Jeremiah 32:17, ‘Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You,

### 3) God is Omnibenevolent.

The word OMNIBENEVOLENT refers to the quality of God that He is all-loving in His nature. Paul made it clear to those on Mar's Hill that God is an all loving God that desires a close relationship with His people.

- The God of Paul deeply desires for men to find Him. Acts 17:2,7 “...*that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him...*”
- The God of Paul wants all to be His children. Acts 17:28, “...*as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children...'*”
- The God of Paul wants all men to come to Him through Jesus Christ His Son. Acts 17:31, “...*having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.*”
- 1 John 4:9, By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.
- 1 Chronicles 16:34, O give thanks to the LORD, for *He is* good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
- Psalm 13:5, But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.

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- 1 Timothy 2:4, God "...desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

### 4) God is Omniscient.

The word OMNISCIENT refers to the all-knowledge perspective of the Father. Certainly Paul communicates that God has personal knowledge of all people.

- The God of Paul knows all the happenings and goings on. *Acts 17:24, "...since He is Lord of heaven and earth..."*
- The God of Paul knows the lifetime and limitations of every man. *Acts 17:26, "...having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation..."*
- The God of Paul is willing to forget our times of ignorance. *Acts 17:30, "...having overlooked the times of ignorance..."*
- Matthew 6:8, "...for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."
- Isaiah 55:8-9, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup> "For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.

### 5) God is Omnipresent.

The word OMNIPRESENT refers to God's ability to be at all places at all times, the quality that makes Him absolutely effective to minister and deal out justice.

- The God of Paul knows our hurts, our needs and our desires. *Acts 17:27, "...though He is not far from each one of us..."*
- The God of Paul knows our daily workings. *Acts 17:28, "...for in Him we live and move and exist..."*
- The God of Paul knows we have a present tense need for repentance. *Acts 17:30 "...God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent..."*
- Matthew 1:23, "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."
- Proverbs 5:21, For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, And He watches all his paths.
- Jeremiah 23:23-24, "Am I a God who is near," declares the LORD, "And not a God far off? <sup>24</sup> "Can a man hide himself in hiding places So I do not see him?" declares the LORD. "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" declares the LORD.

God is Omnificent, Omnipotent, Omnibenevolent, Omniscient and Omnipresent. If God was not those things, then He would not be God, but something less to us. He is in essence the OMNIGOD! He is our OMNI-EVERYTHING!

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### The Three-fold Reaction

Acts 17:32-34, Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some *began* to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this." <sup>33</sup> So Paul went out of their midst. <sup>34</sup> But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

What happens when God is presented in such a way to a group of people? There are three possible primary conclusions that can be reached when confronted with OMNIGOD:

1. You sneer in disapproval.
2. You pause with questioning.
3. You commit to the truth.

When we are sharing the truth of God with others, be prepared to identify all three responses. Ultimately, we only have control over two things, what we teach and whether we teach it. Our job is to present to the world of an all-creating, all-powerful, all-loving, all-knowing and all-present God to our fellow man and let the message to the work.

We sow the seeds of truth and let God do the rest. *1 Corinthians 3:6-7 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. 7 So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.*