

There is Another King: Jesus

Luke – Acts

Paul's Paradigmatic Speech to the Gentiles: Idolatry vs. Rehumanization

Acts 17:15 – 34

Introduction: Become Who You Were Born to Be

I'm going to read off a series of movie quotes, and I'd like you to tell me what movie they're from.

- 'Is there more to life than being really, really, really, good looking?' (*Zoolander*)
- 'Look at me. I will never pass for a perfect bride, or a perfect daughter.' (*Mulan*)
- 'Who am I, Hagrid?' (*Harry Potter*)
- 'Remember who you are.' (*The Lion King*)
- 'Who am I?' (*X-Men 2*)
- 'Put aside the ranger, become who you were born to be.' (*The Return of the King*)

What do these movies have in common? They're all about people who are in search of who they are. In the case of the timeless classic *Zoolander*, Derek Zoolander is beaten by Hansel for model slash actor of the year; he looks at his reflection in the gutter and asks, 'Who am I?' His reflection answers back, 'I don't know.' And as a car drives by and splashes that gutter water in his face, he sets off on a quest to become the person he now realizes he was meant to be. A better person. In the case of *Mulan*, Mulan feels constantly out of place. She also looks at her reflection in a pool of water and asks, 'When will my reflection show who I am inside.' There is a process of becoming. And as she sets off to fight in her father's place, she knows she is stepping even farther away from her rightful place, but in a strange paradox, she is becoming who she was meant to be. In the case of *Harry Potter* and *Wolverine* in *X-Men 2*, both of them have a mysterious identity that they both have to figure out. Who are they? What made them this way? Who were their parents? And as they set off into a journey with an unknown destination, they hope that they will discover who they were meant to be. Of course Simba in *The Lion King* wants to forget who he really is and run away. But he is called back. His father says, 'You have forgotten who you are. Remember who you are.' And he goes back to become who he was meant to be. And then Aragorn in *The Return of the King* is finally given by Elrond the sword Narsil, the sword of King Isildur from long ago, the sword that cut the Ring from Sauron's finger, the sword that calls him forward into his destiny. He is the heir and the rightful King. And he goes to become who he was born to be.

There is an archetype, isn't there? The hero who was supposed to be much more than what he is now. The heroine whose destiny is much larger than what she knows. Somewhere along the way, he fell, she fell, he changed course, she took a wrong turn, history took a detour, and he became less than what he was born to be. But the crisis comes. And he is given a chance, she is given a chance, to be that person again. That story, that archetype is *true*. God gave humanity a great honor. But we fell. We became inhuman. But we still have a destiny, because God hasn't given up on us. God has shown up in human form: Jesus. And now we are being confronted by a crisis. Jesus is that crisis, because he is the human being we are all meant to be. Jesus is God's new humanity. He was the amazing man who walked in the consistent awareness of God and God's heart. In the midst of our inhumanity, Jesus is God's true humanity. And people everywhere are given a chance to join Jesus. God is re-humanizing humanity through Jesus. This is humanity reloaded, humanity re-mastered, literally!

This is what we are doing. We play a part of this. You see, if you see becoming a Christian as something that is superhuman on the one hand, or something nerdy on the other, something to be embarrassed about as the world watches, something that just has downsides, then we will always do evangelism reluctantly and then stop doing it altogether. But if we see becoming a Christian as becoming truly human, becoming who were always meant to be, then we will do evangelism with real compassion and confidence.

Text:

This is our last message from Acts 17 and my last time to share with you. Let me remind you that this is the first and only evangelistic speech to the Gentiles recorded in detail in Acts. In Luke's mind, it is not

merely an incident. It's a paradigm. It exemplifies Paul's way of telling the Gentiles about Jesus. Peter in Acts 2 and Paul in Acts 13 demonstrate how to tell the Jews about Jesus. They do it in basically the same way. So Paul in Acts 17 demonstrates how to tell the Gentiles about Jesus. It's also significant that it happens in Athens, the city that led culture and fashion in the Greek world. Like jazz came from New Orleans and movies come from Hollywood, culture came from Athens. What is the issue that blocks people's ability to come to Jesus and be re-humanized?

What Got Paul Going – Idolatry: v.16

Let's look at what got Paul talking, in v.16: '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.' And that's the answer to the question of what blocks people from Jesus and from God: idols. Always has, always been. Idols are the way people thought they could grab hold of the world, control it, and make it okay apart from God. Having an idol is like having your hands full. You don't want to let things go, so you can't pick up other things very well either. Or, it's like being the little monkey who can reach his hand into a hole cut into a coconut. He knows there's something in it that he wants. But the hole isn't big enough for him to pull his hand out. So he's stuck. He doesn't want to let go.

Here are some examples:

- * 'Your friend says, 'I know that this person I'm dating isn't the greatest for me. But it's better to have someone now than to be uncertain about who God will bring in the future.'
- * 'I can't not go to grad school. I can't disappoint my parents.'
- * 'I can't become a Christian. My friends will just hassle me.'

My question for you is, 'Do you see the idol worship today?' How can you tell? Now you might ask whether we have idols today, since we don't have figurines we bow down to. Well, Paul said that sexual sin and greed is idolatry (Eph.5:5, Col.3:5). So it's not the physical thing but the spiritual attitude. We don't have the physical form like the Greeks, so we can just call them what they are. You can study Paul's analysis of idol worship in Romans 1:21 – 32, Ephesians 5:5, and Colossians 3:5, as well as Isaiah's analysis in Isaiah 44. When you can't embrace something good God has, or, equivalently, where you can't let go of something bad He wants you to let go of.

Think of the ways we want to grab hold of the world and control some part of it, and there you have idol worship. Some worship romance as a way of anchoring life – that's Aphrodite. Some worship parties as a way of escaping reality – that's Bacchus and Dionysius, the gods of wine, the rock stars of the Greek gods. Some worship their parents and authority structures – that's Zeus, the head of the social order. Some worship money – that's Hermes, the god of speed and efficiency. Some worship success – that's Ares, the god of war and victory. Some worship the idea that they can be everything and be on good terms with everyone – that's Proteus, the shape-shifter, who can adjust to any situation. Some worship an image of ourselves or who we want to be – that's Narcissus staring in a pool, the great narcissist. When you go back to campus and you share your desire to reach the campus, and you get push back from people, it's because their hands are closed. They want the fellowship to be about safety and survival. What Jesus is trying to do through you is to open their hands, to receive him and receive people from him in a new way.

Do you sense the temptation to worship idols in your own heart even now? Just because we're Christians doesn't mean that we never worship idols. The very last command in 1 John 5 is 'Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.' He has to warn Christians not to go back that way. Why? We'll do a diagnosis of the Athenians in a little while based on what Paul says to them and based on what we know about idolatry. It's pretty simple, but it's very significant.

So how do we speak to people about idolatry today? Let's see how Paul does it. Notice that v.17 – 18 describes Paul's message to a Jewish and Gentile audience. It's a mixed audience. He starts telling them about Jesus. Then the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers bring him before an audience that is completely Gentile for a second message. So v.19 – 34 is Paul's message to an all-Gentile audience. And he questions them about whether it makes sense to worship all these idols.

Paul's Message to an All-Gentile Audience: v.19 – 34

They take him to the White House of that day, the Areopagus. The city's elders met there to make policy and decide cases. The name Areopagus means the 'hill of Ares,' the god of war. It was a rocky hill. In mythology, it was where Ares was tried for murder and acquitted. The myth also said it was the first courtroom proceeding to take place, at least in Greece. So Paul, in some ways, is on trial. His life is not at stake, but the elders are weighing his message in council. Verses 19 – 21 say, '19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, 'May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?' 20 For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean.' 21 (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)' That last editorial comment means that Paul's message was so radical that it stood out from all the other news and gossip and rumors that anyone had ever heard in Athens. It was a coherent challenge. They had to know more. Paul takes this great opportunity and begins in v.22, '22 So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, 'Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.' 23 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.'

We already talked about listening to people's stories and helping them interpret them. This is what Paul does. Most people already believe in a 'God' in some form. It's probably based on their childhood questions, ambiguous, unclear, and hazy. But they have their 'altar to an unknown god' right there just in case. Their problem is not so much that they don't believe in God but that they worship so many other things. One survey I read this year claims that only 1% of Americans say they're atheists. Most people are practical polytheists. They worship many things. And that's the basic nature of idolatry: you can be eclectic, you can believe in all kinds of things, but don't make me choose.

Four Aspects of Idolatry and Four Aspects of Rehumanization

So Paul also directly challenges their idolatry and behind that, their story, in v.24 – 31. Idolatry dehumanizes us in at least four ways, and Paul says, 'I disagree with all four of them.' But Jesus re-humanizes.

First, idolatry distorts. The Greeks believed that their gods lived in temples made with hands and needed human beings to serve them. If you ever worshiped your parents as gods, what did they ask for to keep them happy? Really high scores? Certain sacrifices? Just extrapolate that out to the cosmic level. Business is down at the restaurant and you wonder, 'Uh-oh, what god is upset?' These *gods* need things from us to keep them happy. You'd feel afraid, bitter, and basically trapped. And then, the feng shui experts show up. How do you appease the gods? People then get manipulated to no end. Idolatry distorts. She feels like she needs to stay with the loser boyfriend to fix him. He feels unable to avoid being stressed out. They have to feed the meter. But the true God doesn't 'need' us to 'feed' Him. Paul says in v.24 – 25, '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; 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.' We don't do things for His survival or His ego. We do things because He calls us to be just as generous and loving as He is in the midst of uncertainty, but His love is certain. That is why Jesus sets us free.

Illus: A friend of mine had an eating disorder when she came into college. She was very smart, and part of her hard work ethic came from trying to please her parents, who were both kind of unstable people. Anger, drinking, fighting, but also emotional dependence on her, and making her be the reliable one. Her parents were hard to be close to. Her world was scary because it felt like it could fall apart. The only sense of control she had was over how hard she worked and how much she ate. When things were too stressful, she'd drink hard. She thought, 'Well, that's what I have to do to make mom and dad be okay, and to keep the peace here.' But when she came to Jesus, he helped her let go of her need for control, he took away her need to make her family okay, he took away her eating disorder almost overnight, he helped her be free from the distorted reality she lived in. Jesus sets us free.

Second, idolatry divides. The philosophers in v.18 really say, 'He seems to be a proclaimer of *foreign* deities.' The word translated 'strange' is the same as 'foreign.' Anything not from Greece seems foreign, strange. The Greeks worshiped Greek gods. The Egyptians worshiped the Nile and the Egyptian gods.

Everyone had their own gods who supposedly fought on their behalf. When one people went to war against another, they thought there was a war between their gods, too. So idols divided people and prevented reconciliation. They were the physical symbol of an attitude: We're better. The Athenians believed that they were descended from a different ancestor, so their humanity was a different humanity from everyone else. They were superior. And isn't this how we are as people? In Asian cultures, this happens. In Japanese, there's a label for Japanese people who get educated elsewhere and then come back to Japan. They're seen as 'not quite normal,' and the label is not positive. They've been tainted. In China, the word 'China' means 'middle kingdom,' as if China were the center of universe. A Korean friend jokes that the Korean word for themselves is 'cho-sen' so he says, 'We are the chosen people.' White America has a 'chosen people' mentality, too. 'We were chosen by God to bring our way of life to the rest of the world.' Idolatry reinforces that bias because our idols are made here, they live in temples right here, and they're on our side. Idolatry divides. So Paul says, 'Well, you've actually known something about God right here in your altar to the unknown god, so He's not completely foreign,' but also to the Athenians in v. 26: 'He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth.' You're the same as everyone else. No superiority complex. That is why Jesus gives us reconciliation and unity in his body. It doesn't mean we all have to be best friends. But it does mean that we get the power of Christ to be his body.

Illus: Let me give you an example of how Jesus rehumanizes us from divisions. When I went to go live among Mexican immigrant families in 1995, a year after I graduated from school, I had some real culture shock. It was in a lower income area, and I had never lived in an apartment complex quite like that, so that was real culture shock. But the first issue came up around my name. When I introduced myself, 'Hi, I'm Mako,' some of the adults looked surprised and some of the kids giggled. I asked my mentor Jose Espinosa why that might be happening. He said, 'Oh, well, your name is very close to 'moco' which is the Spanish word for 'boogers.'" I thought, 'Great. You know, I went through a few years of not liking my name when I was young because I wished it was more Western. Then I went through all this healing. I like my name now. And now this!' Boogers! I said to Jose, 'What I went by my full name, Makoto.' He said, 'I don't think you should do that. I asked why not. He said, 'Because when you end a Spanish word with 'ito' it means small. When you end it with 'oto' it means big. So Makoto just sounds like 'big boogers'!!' I thought, 'Great.' My name means 'truth' in Japanese. But in Spanish it just sounds like 'big boogers.' But Jesus gave me the strength to not get so frustrated. And over the course of time, it became forgotten. I wound up being able to receive a lot from those Mexican families and the part of Mexican culture they represented. Their hospitality was amazing; they'd invite me in and offer me food when their refrigerators were almost cleaned out. And those 4 years of my life were the time I experienced Christ so profoundly in my own life. I came to love those particular families. That was important because during that first year, my mom disowned me essentially because she didn't like Mexican people. I mean when it came right down to it, that was the issue. She doesn't know Christ, and part of me really sympathized with her fears. But on that issue, I held my ground, because Jesus calls her to surrender her fears and prejudices to him, to rehumanize her. I am called to be faithful to him.

Third, idolatry dehumanizes. Why? We begin to behave like what we worship. We worship someone else who gets props from others, and we need props from others to tell us we're doing okay; it makes us even more needy. We worship something greedy, like a Porsche, or a particular lifestyle, something that needs a lot of money to feed it, and we become greedy. We worship efficiency and we become more and more like a machine. The idol hurts us. [We worship something nationalistic, like a flag, and we become even more nationalistic.] That's why Paul says in v.29 to the Athenians that they're hurting themselves. The Athenians, by thinking they were more than human, had become less than human. By worshiping gold, silver, and stone idols, they were greedy, needy, and fearful. Jesus offers to heal us.

Illus: One of the idols I worshiped was power, and it dehumanized me. I remember being 10 years old, at a swim practice, and my mom was there to pick me up. The very last thing the coach had us do was relays, and my heart leapt, because I loved relays. You only had to swim one lap, and it took up a lot of time!! Then he said, 'We're going to do butterfly relays.' And my heart sank, because I wasn't good at butterfly. But since my mom was there, I thought, 'Maybe I'll be picked to be a captain.' But of course I wasn't. But my friend Jack was picked as one of the captains. And I thought, 'Well, if I'm not picked captain, then at least I can be picked first!' After all, Jack was my...friend...right? But I wasn't picked first. I wasn't

picked second. I was picked next to last. And the kid who was picked last had breathing problems, so you know how I was feeling!!! Normally, the strategy in relays is to send your fastest person last, and build up to that. My team somehow decided to send me last but give me a huge head start. Sure enough, when I jumped in the water, I had a big lead. I was afraid of choking on water, so I didn't lift my head up the whole time. So when I finally touched the wall on the other side, I only saw then that the other team had beat me. I looked up at the other team, and they were cheering...for me. I looked at my team, and they were disappointed. We had to clean up the pool and get the lane lines out. And as I sat there on the wall, something happened in me. I realized that in this game, in this race, friendship didn't mean a thing. And it didn't, did it?!? Friendship didn't mean a thing! Not only that, I learned that my success was going to be built on...someone else's failure. My success would be built on other people's failure! I wouldn't have articulated it quite like that at the time, but from that moment, I lived life hoping that other people would fail more frequently than me. You say, 'That's an awful way to be.' Yes, I was awful. That's what my idolatry led me into. I clutched whatever power I could, even at other people's expense.

But Jesus pried my fingers loose. I began to take Jesus seriously my freshman year of college, and I prayed for my younger sister to come to Jesus. She did, that very year! She told me it was through a teacher at her high school, Cerritos High School. This teacher, Mr. Mac, opened up his classroom every day at lunch. Every day was a different activity. Mondays were worship. Tuesdays was a speaker from Biola. Wednesdays were discussion. Thursdays were a game. Fridays were hangout times. My sister met Jesus there. So after I was done with finals my freshman year, I went home and visited this teacher. He was this elderly white man with silver hair. He was wearing a funky red plaid shirt and a bright red tie. I thought, 'Who is this guy?' But he had joy written all over his face. I went up to him and said, 'Thank you for your ministry.' When I left that day, I felt this strong sense in my heart that God was saying, 'Mako, that could be you.' I said, 'NNNNOOOOOOO!!!!' But you can't escape from God's voice. It took a whole year for me to think through this. But finally, the next summer, I went to my parents and said, 'Mom, Dad, I'm thinking about education.' They said, 'Oh! You're going to be a professor? Great!' I said, 'No, I'm thinking about high school teaching.' They said, 'Then why are we sending you to Stanford?' I said, 'I don't know.' We argued that whole summer, and I realized that I was trying to clutch, to hold on to a lot of things: God's voice, Stanford, my parents, my sense of power and success. So after a few months, I got tired of being cut by my own idols. I got tired of my own hypocrisy. I couldn't tell them how for me it was about carving out space for Jesus; they're not believers. So I said to them, 'I'm not even saying that I'm sure I want to be a teacher. But I want to take a few steps in that direction to figure things out. But if you think that by paying for my tuition you have the right to tell me what to do, I won't go to Stanford. I can let go of that. I'll go live and work somewhere else. I'll pay my own way. It'll take longer, but that's fine. I may not have to go into teaching. But I also don't have to Stanford.' That set me free. Jesus used that summer to break my grip on my idols. That's the real reason why I was able to love people better after that. That's the reason why I felt free and empowered to do urban ministry. Jesus rehumanized me.

Illus: In the third of C.S. Lewis' Narnia stories, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, a boy named Eustace Scrubb finds a gold bracelet in a dragon's cave. Full of excitement, he puts it on. When he wakes up the next morning, he discovers that he has become a dragon. The bracelet on his arm, which he so loved the day before – he would like nothing more than to take it off because it hasn't changed size while he has, and now it cuts into his arm. What he once wanted so badly now hurts him. But he can't get it off. Then he encounters the Lion. And here's how Eustace narrates that journey to his cousin. "The Lion told me to follow him."

"You mean it spoke?"

"I don't know. Now that you mention it, I don't think it did. But it told me all the same. And I knew I'd have to do what it told me, so I got up and followed it. And it led me a long way into the mountains. And there was always this moonlight over and round the lion wherever we went. So at last we came to the top of a mountain I'd never seen before and on top of this mountain there was a garden--trees and fruit and everything. In the middle of it there was a well.

"I knew it was a well because you could see the water bubbling up from the bottom of it: but it was a lot bigger than most wells--like a very big, round bath with marble steps going down into it. The water was as clear as anything and I thought if I could get in there and bathe it would ease the pain in my leg. But the lion told me I must undress first. Mind you, I don't know if he said any words out loud or not.

"I was just going to say that I couldn't undress because I hadn't had any clothes on when I suddenly thought that dragons are snaky sort of things and snakes can cast their skins. Oh, of course, thought I, that's what the lion means. So I started scratching myself and my scales began coming off all over the place. And then I scratched a little deeper and, instead of just scales coming off here and there, my whole skin started peeling off beautifully, like it does after an illness, or as if I was a banana. In a minute or two I just stepped out of it. I could see it lying there beside me, looking rather nasty. It was a most lovely feeling. So I started to go down into the well for my bath.

"But just as I was going to put my foot into the water I looked down and saw that it was all hard and rough and wrinkled and scaly just as it had been before. Oh, that's all right, said I, it only means I had another smaller suit on underneath the first one, and I'll have to get out of it too. So I scratched and tore again and this under skin peeled off beautifully and out I stepped and left it lying beside the other one and went down to the well for my bath.

"Well, exactly the same thing happened again. And I thought to myself, oh dear, how ever many skins have I got to take off? For I was long to bathe my leg. So I scratched away for the third time and got off a third skin, just like the two others, and stepped out of it. But as soon as I looked at myself in the water I knew it had been no good.

"Then the lion said--but I don't know if it spoke--You will have to let me undress you. I was afraid of his claws, I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate now. So I just lay flat down on my back to let him do it.

"The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off. You know – if you've ever picked the scab of a sore place. It hurts but it is such fun to see it coming away."

Then Aslan throws him into the pool, and Eustace becomes human again. The bracelet slides off his arm, and he becomes who he was meant to be. But when Jesus transforms us, his touch goes deep, and it causes enormous pain. He pries our fingers open. He pries our fingers loose. And it hurts. But he calls us to open our hands afresh to the good things he has for us. In so doing, he re-humanizes us.

And fourth, idolatry defines your 'happily ever after.' If I told you I lived in the immigrant story, what would you immediately know about me? You would know some things: family struggle, expectations on the me as the second generation, feeling torn between two cultures, questions of identity, and a quest for success in the majority culture. What's my happily ever after? Success for me, honor for my parents, security for my children. How? My hard work and smart thinking. That is the immigrant story, isn't it? Well, if I told you that I lived *primarily* in the immigrant story, you would also know what my idols are by what my 'happily ever after' is: parents, money, status, and the desire to congratulate myself and have my children congratulate me. Whatever is your 'happily ever after' is your idolatry.

That's why Paul says in v.31 that *Jesus* will bring about the happy ending for the world. He will judge the world in righteousness. *He* will make all things right. The Athenians believed that they would do it. They thought they were 'all that.' According to their myths, they were the judicial center of the Greek world. They defeated the Persian navy and surpassed Sparta as leader of the Greek city-states. They had a stable democracy for about 500 years. They had famous people from there: philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, playwrights like Aeschylus, Euripedes, and Sophocles, historians like Herodotus and Thucydides. If you visited, you'd see the greatest buildings in the classical world: the Parthenon, the Temple of Athena, and the Temple of the Olympian Zeus, the largest Temple in Greece. They thought of themselves as the center of culture. Everyone came to Athens to talk. In that sense, they were their own 'happy ending,' their own idol. Nazis thought that a super-race will bring about a happily ever after. Americans dream that our economy will bring a happily ever after. Our campuses think that elite education will bring a happily ever after. Movies like *The Matrix* and *The Terminator* envision machines ruling the world because we thought efficiency will bring a happily ever after. Our idolatry defines our happily ever after. But Athens will not make the world right. Jesus will. Who will judge between all things? Jesus. Who will judge between all people? Jesus. Who will deliver on the happy ending? Jesus, and only Jesus.

Paul on Campus: A Translation

Idolatry distorts, divides, dehumanizes, and defines a 'happily ever after.' Now just to help us understand what this might have felt like for the original Athenians listening to Paul, I've translated this episode as if Paul were at one of our campuses.¹⁶ Now while Paul was waiting for them at the edge of campus, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the campus full of weird stories, weird values, and weird things of worship. What kind of world would this be, if there were no alternative?¹⁷ So he was reasoning with the folks at Hillel. But he would also go to the Religious Studies Department, and the Campus Center everyday.¹⁸ And some of the Epicurean-like partiers and the Stoic-like hard-workers 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.¹⁹ And they took him and brought him to the Faculty Senate building, saying, 'May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?'²⁰ For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean.'²¹ (Now all the visitors to the Campus Center used to spend their time telling stories or checking each other out, so this was unusual.)²² So Paul stood in the middle of the room and said, 'Studious men and women, I observe that you love many things.²³ While I was passing through and examining the objects you enjoy, I found references to 'God': 'One nation under God,' and 'in God we trust,' and so on. It seems like you really enjoy yourself, your family, your nation, and your money. But whatever it is, I'd like to tell you what the implications of God's story are.²⁴ The God who made the world and all things in it does not dwell simply in the U.S.;²⁵ nor is He to be identified with the spread of capitalism, as though He needed our hard work, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;²⁶ and He made from one man every ethnicity of humankind to live on all the face of the earth, even Iraqis, who you don't really care about, Ugandans and Sudanese, same thing, and Palestinians and Kurds, who you haven't even allowed to be 'nations' per se,²⁷ that they would all seek God and find Him;²⁸ for because of Him we live and move and exist, as one of your New Age gurus said, 'We are all children of the divine.'²⁹ Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like a super smart brain; that would affirm only smart people like you. Nor is the Divine Nature like a super-beautiful human being, like a 22 year old, usually White model on a magazine cover enhanced by makeup and computer graphics, because clearly we're not really like that.³⁰ But the real God has overlooked all these misconceptions and is still calling all people everywhere to repent,³¹ because He will bring a happy ending and judge the world with righteousness, not by elevating one person or one group or one culture, but through one new Man, who He has already elevated by doing the thing that all your technology still can't do, that is, by raising him from the dead in a body that will never die.'³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, 'We'd like to hear you again concerning this.'³³ So Paul went out of their midst.³⁴ But some people joined him and believed and started a campus fellowship.

Why Paul Was Effective

Paul challenges idolatry diplomatically, uses the inclusive 'we' in v.29. 'We ought not to think...' He doesn't single them out with, 'God is calling *you* to repent,' but 'God is calling all people everywhere to repent.' Remember that we are also enticed to worship idols, too, to grip with our hands things we want to control. So it's not an us-them type of thing on this point. WE are always being changed. So WE need to speak to others as WE.

A lot of the time, we think that we can have it all. I definitely thought that way. Like some of you, I enjoyed the feeling that all my options were open. I liked the start of every quarter when I looked at all the classes that I could possibly take. I didn't actually like deciding on them and taking them, but I liked *the idea* of taking them. Then when I had to choose a major, I liked both Industrial Engineering and Public Policy. One was science, the other social science. So I chose both. But there's only so long in your youth that you can keep all your options open. For the rest of your life, a choosing one thing means not choosing other things. When I married my wife, I chose to know her and not to know other women in the same way. When we decided to have kids, I chose to invest in these two little people and not in others in the same way. Self-limiting choices bring us life in profound ways. Why would it be otherwise spiritually? When we make a self-limiting choice to know and love Jesus alone, we find life.

Finally, look at Paul's heart. His spirit was provoked within him – his heart was burning – about the idols and the way people dehumanize themselves. But he's equally passionate about Jesus rehumanizing us.

Perhaps this is also why he insists on majoring on the resurrection. We were meant to be even more human, the way God intended. Jesus is who we were meant to be.