

***Becoming Witnesses***  
***Acts 17:16-31***

Athens was an intimidating setting in which to share the gospel. Speaking before the Areopagus was like arguing before the Supreme Court. The dominant philosophers of Athens, the Epicureans and Stoics, held views at odds with the gospel, and the visual "competition" was intense. Paul preached while literally standing in the shadow of the greatest pagan temple ever built. Despite these intimidating obstacles, Paul's sermon was effective. Here are a few reasons for Paul's effectiveness.

The Bible refers to Paul being "greatly distressed" about the idolatry of Athens. He was passionate about the lost—a lover of people. The famous text about love, 1 Cor. 13, was Paul's appeal for us to love others as God loved them, so that when we see the condition, the brokenness of their souls, it breaks us. Let us pray for God to break our hearts for the people around us who need to be rescued that we might be unintimidated by neither the world nor even by the devil himself.

Paul was also practiced. He had been sharing the gospel daily. Practice talking about the gospel. You'll get better and you'll gain confidence. Who knows, it might prepare you for an opportunity of a witness coming your way.

But most importantly, Paul was successful because he knew the human condition—we were created with a God-shaped hole in our souls that longs to be filled.

Not everyone was sick and tired of pushing that rock of striving for soul-satisfaction up the hill, but a few were. What Paul said rang true with them and they believed. The Unknown God found a home in Athens because Paul was persuaded that he had the answer they were searching for: Jesus.

Are you absolutely persuaded of that? If you are, it's because you have found your rest in Jesus. If you aren't, there must be a hole left to be filled and a burdensome boulder to stop pushing.