

## **TARSUS AND JERUSALEM: THE INTERPLAY OF KNOWLEDGE AND SPIRITUALITY READING ACTS 17:22-28 AS A THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO THE QUEST FOR GOSPEL MINISTERIAL EFFICIENCY**

**Abstract.** This article poses as a response to contemporary cold reception toward all-inclusive, in-depth and integrated theological training. Theological institutions and Universities that operate integrated curriculum for religious studies become challenged to justify the necessity of the rigorous theological training they offer. It becomes more challenging when there are mentions of some Christian denominational heads with global recognition, yet, believed to be without formal theological training. In response, the writer of this article made an exegetical study of Acts 17:22-28, and brought Paul's particular example and encounter in Athens, his person, life and underpinning philosophy of evangelism, to bear on the consolidation of the point that pursuit and acquaintance of in-depth and broadened theological training remains necessary, indispensable, very relevant, rewarding, beneficial and prerequisite for competent and effective Gospel ministry. The findings showed that Paul had been a student of his world and when he became a follower of Christ, he invested his wide intellectual knowledge and theological training toward the actualization of his ministerial goals. More than that, not only was Paul himself a learned person, but, that human learning means both ornamental and serviceable to a Gospel minister, especially for the kingdom business of convincing of those that are without. Consequently, this article recommended that continuous efforts be made to stress the unequivocal necessity of sound theological scholarship as complementary to spiritual vibrancy, for Gospel ministry efficiency.

### **Introduction**

Contemporary Gospel preachers or ministers are engaged by sustaining the trend of the kingdom business. They are to continue from where Christ, the apostles and the first century church fathers left off. The goal remains same, to take the message of God's salvific work in Christ Jesus round the world, for the purpose of keeping the believers in faith and reconciling the lost with God. Gospel ministry, an aspect of purpose-driven Christian life that affords human participation and work with God, creates the divine enabling atmosphere for Christian to be part of carriers of the most wonderful news ever associated with humanity, God among men in human form. The fascinating nature of this news makes very challenging relating it convincingly to those that are without. While every generation is confronted with a particular challenge going about this kingdom business, in like manner, the author of this article observes that two things, which form the thesis of

this article, vibrant spirituality and sound scholarship, are indispensable to all generations for effective Gospel ministry.

Nevertheless, this article's author observes that three categories of Gospel ministers exist in the present time namely: the untrained, the trained but never applied, the trained and applied. The untrained Gospel ministers believed that knowledge has little or no value for the kingdom business. To them, everything about the kingdom business rises and falls on the spirituality alone. The second group, the trained but never applied, this writer observes that some Gospel ministers attended theological or Universities for training just to acquire the certificate of operation. To this group, going to school for Gospel ministry equipping is nothing short of fulfillment of all denominational righteousness. Yet, there is this group that I observe as well, the group of difference makers, the trained and determined to apply their training. This writer, a theological educator with the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Oyo, Nigeria, with specialization on biblical languages and literature, made a sampling of the opinions of his students regarding the place or necessity of formal training to a Gospel minister and the ministry. Their open-minded responses, having learnt of the alarming level of misconceptions, triggered the motivation and interest to write this article. This article means to defend the necessity of integrated and broadened theological training as being unequivocally rewarding to a Gospel minister, especially for effective kingdom business of winning the lost and reconciling them with God in this ever changing and dynamic world.

As a healing approach, apostle Paul becomes seen as personified of two unprecedented capitals namely: Tarsus, his place of birth, the capital of Cilicia, and Jerusalem, his place of upbringing, the capital of Judah. These two capitals are given the description as seat of knowledge and theology respectively, with respect to the influence they both had in Paul's spiritual vibrancy and sound scholarship, especially as reflected in the records in Acts 17:22-28. In addition to exegetical study of the sampled Bible passage, this article takes a look at the man called Paul vis-à-vis his family, life and ministry; the city of Tarsus and Jerusalem, with educational system in the Greco-Roman world. Conclusion is drawn on the point that human learning means both ornamental and serviceable to a Gospel minister, especially for effective kingdom business of convincing those that are without.

### **A Survey of the Man Called Paul**

The would be an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ was introduced to us initially by the name Saul (Acts 7:58), the same as he was called by the Lord (Acts 9:4). Being very proud as a Benjamite (Rom 11:1; Phil 3:5), it becomes very probable that he was intentionally or unintentionally named after the then most celebrated man of the tribe of Benjamin - the

King Saul of Kish - the very first leader of the nation of Israel. Nevertheless, other than his Jewish name - Saul- as equally a Roman citizen, it is required of him to have a further three Roman (Latin) names – a family name *Praenomen*, a title name *nomen*, and a personal name *cognomen*.<sup>1</sup> Of all his three Latin names, only the last - *cognomen* - *Paulus* - was known and common. This name - *Paulus*- would later got rhymed with the Greek name *Paulos* meaning “small,”<sup>2</sup> apparently as a nickname in reference to his size since he was said to be a man of small stature.<sup>3</sup>

After the incident of the event involving the encounter with Bar-Jesus and Sergius Paulus in Paphos, a city in Cyprus as accounted in Acts 13:6ff where the narrator revealed that Saul was also called Paul, the writer of the book of Acts maintained the use of this name “Paul” throughout the account. The purpose could be as deemed suiting to the environment where his ministerial endeavors thrived. The conjecture of Augustine that the apostle, on the occasion of his meeting with the Roman proconsul - Sergius Paulus-, assumed the name Paul out of compliment to the proconsul,<sup>4</sup> and also the common assertion that his name was changed from Saul – Paul after his conversion experience, both lack practical evidence. The existence of alternative names side-by-side – a Jewish and a Greek or Roman name – was quite common phenomenon among Jews of the 1st century. For instance John Mark, but the case of Paul is not the same, we never read of Saul – Paul.<sup>5</sup>

Family reputation is the starting point for an individual’s own reputation; of course, this experience is universal as long as human biological relationship is concerned.<sup>6</sup> There is no much available information regarding to apostle Paul’s family. However, among the few available include the fact that he was born into a very religiously observant Jewish family that is traced to Gischala in Galilee. His descendant is traced from the tribe of Benjamin,<sup>7</sup> of pure and unmixed Jewish blood (Acts 23:6; Phil 3:5). Nothing is learnt about his mother. There is reading about his sister and her son in Acts 23:16, and indeed, of other relatives (Rom. 16:7, 11-13).

As it was customary for every Jew to learn a trade, Paul learnt tent-making or general leather work which probably could be his father’s or general family business. He was sent

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce, 33.

<sup>2</sup> Water, 348.

<sup>3</sup> A. J. Maclean, “Paul The Apostle” *Hastings’ Dictionary of The Bible* (New York: Hendrickson, 1998), 687.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> David A. Desilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity, 2004), 137.

<sup>7</sup> F.F. Bruce, “Paul in Acts and Letters” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1993), 679-691.

to study under the most famous Jewish Rabbi, Gamaliel, in the Hillel school at Jerusalem at around age 12/13.<sup>8</sup> It is arguable that his family would have not been so pleased with him after investing much on him as a son of a Pharisee Jew, trained to be a reputable Rabbi, Paul would later trade everything just for the joy of coming to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The extent his family had lived in Tarsus is subject to argument but evidently, the family business of tent-making or perhaps, general leatherworks thrived; of course, Cilicia was famous for its goats' hair production.<sup>9</sup> From the look of things, Paul's family was satisfactorily rich. However, this picture appears not fitting as to why the apostle himself was poor, and had to work for his livelihood as a tent-maker even as did every other Cilicians or Tarsians (Acts 18:3; 20:33ff; cf 1 Cor 9:15; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8). Notwithstanding, according to A. J. Maclean, the prosperity of the family is seen from the fact that later, apostle Paul clearly was treated fairly. He enthused that other than his sister's son role – a sign of family's backup – in saving his life (Acts 23:16), the whole story of the imprisonment in Palestine and Rome and of the voyage to Italy proves that he was a prisoner of distinction. This could come only from the possession of some wealth and arguably from family influence.<sup>10</sup>

The two major unique stages in Paul's early life include his childhood – spent in Tarsus – and his early teenage and adult years – spent in Jerusalem. The compound Greek vocabulary *anatēthrammenos* translated “having been brought up” is from the word *anatassomai*, meaning “to arrange or to compose.”<sup>11</sup> This could most likely be referring to his education under the Professor Gamaliel rather than suggesting a child's development since it is of wide consensus that Paul moved to Jerusalem for his professional rabbinic training around the age of 12/13. During the killing of Stephen, when Paul would have undoubtedly had completed his rabbinic training, he was described as a *neanias* “a young man or a youth” (Acts 20:9; 23:17,18,22). This gives the picture of “one who is in the prime and vigour of life.”<sup>12</sup> At this time, Paul, a Pharisee and a trained rabbi, with enviable religious zeal, could be a member of the great synagogue leaders – Sanhedrin. Other than as perceived, there is no practical evidence that he had attained the level of membership of the great and reputable Jewish leaders of seventy-one-man team. Argument about whether Paul was a full member of the seventy-one man team, or just their zealous “errand boy” is

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<sup>8</sup> Water, 348.

<sup>9</sup> Unger, 237.

<sup>10</sup> A. J. Maclean, “Paul The Apostle” *Hastings' Dictionary of The Bible*, 687.

<sup>11</sup> Mounce, 73.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 326.

among the ongoing debates in New Testament biblical studies of which the space and time of this work will not permit for further writing.

Throughout Paul's lifetime, it was clearly expressed that he was very joyous and proud of his Jewish background, as well as his Tarsian nativity. There had been efforts made to unravel the influence of formal Greek rhetoric found in the structure of some of the letters and sermons credited to his name. Notwithstanding, there are no clear evidence that he attended the university in Tarsus. Although he did not necessarily find all aspects of the lifestyle of Hellenistic culture equally appealing, nevertheless, Paul had a robust appreciation for life in the urban center of the empire and a sympathetic understanding of the pressures faced by those who were trying to follow Jesus' teaching and example in such a context.<sup>13</sup> To say that Paul was around during Jesus days will be without much dispute. Whether he met with him during his earthly lifetime – that is other than the encounter with the risen Christ – is not clearly stated in the Bible and information regarding this is subject to dispute.

Paul shared dual citizenship – a Jew and a Roman – both of which he acquired by birth (Philippians 3:5; Acts 22:27-28) and concerning which he was very proud. The benefits thereof being fully maximized toward the achievement of his ministerial goals. His Jewish citizenship by birth is without much dispute having been born of Jewish parents. However, his own witness as a free born Roman citizen implies that, the right of Roman citizenship would have been conferred on his Jewish parent(s). Information regarding how his parent(s) came about their Roman citizenship acquisition remains conspicuous.<sup>14</sup> Apparently, they would have rendered significant help to the Roman government.<sup>15</sup> During this time, acquisition of Roman citizenship could be done through various ways: First, one might be born to citizen parent(s) (*ingenuus*). Second, it might be the reward for some valuable services rendered to the Roman government. Third, it could be granted en bloc through colonization or promotion to Latin rights. Fourth, preferment in the grant of citizenship was available at times for financial consideration and so on.<sup>16</sup> The reading in Acts 22 reveals how costly it could be to acquire Roman citizenship *I had to pay a lot of money for my citizenship* “but I was born a citizen” Paul replied (Acts 22:28 NIV).

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<sup>13</sup> John Drane, *Introducing the New Testament* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2010), 253.

<sup>14</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *The New Testament: Its Background, Growth and Contents* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 192.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Brian M. Rapske, “Roman Citizenship” *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 2000), 215-217.

That apostle Paul was a very zealous Judaizer is an assertion without much dispute and concerning which he was very outspoken. The environment the early church found herself was very hostile. As a result, she was faced with the task of proving her gentleness and that she is not a rebellious movement bent on the kind of revolt started by the false messiah-Theudas (Acts 5:36). The fact that Jesus had preached a kingdom besides the rule of Caesar, as well as being crucified as “King of the Jew” under Pontius Pilate, all made matters more and more difficult (Matt. 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38).<sup>17</sup> At the time of Jesus’ arrest in Jerusalem, even Paul was thought to be a zealot insurrectionist from Egypt (Acts 21:38).<sup>18</sup> Amidst all these challenges and confusion, the early church was determined to prove that Christianity is a peaceful religion, not even in their mode of carrying the Gospel was any act of violent found. The Bible reads – I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers (Gal 1:14 NIV). The Greek word for zealous in this passage is *zēlōtēs* which is usually given an adjective translation “zealous” but in fact, it is a noun-3rd declension, masculine nominative singular from *zēleuō*, meaning “an aspirant” “a devoted adherent.”<sup>19</sup> According to James Dunn, if the passage is read literally, it would appear that Paul advocated being an extreme zealot for the traditions of his fathers prior to his encounter with the risen Christ.<sup>20</sup> On account of this zeal, Paul had wanted and/or desired to destroy the church (Gal 1:13). Thus, as with any other young person, Paul’s character was formed by many and diverse influences in his early life and the complex interaction of them. His inherited temperamental disposition, as well as his religious upbringing, holds many clues to the person he became both as a Jew and as a Christian.<sup>21</sup>

### **Paul at Conversion**

Conversion experience means a miraculous act of God that is made manifest in the life of a sinner that turns a saint. It is very important in the life of a believer in Christ as it marks the genesis of one’s Christian faith. This importance is underscored in the fact that Paul’s conversion experience is always emphasized in his letters. Even in the historical narrative of Luke-Acts, this unique experience is related in several chapters, one as accounted by the writer of the Books of Luke-Act and others quoted as related by Paul himself during some of his self-defenses (Act 9, 22, 26; Philippians 3:7, I Corinthians 9:1; 15:8). Paul had always been boastful about his encounter with the risen Christ. From all indications, he

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<sup>17</sup> William A. Simmons, *Peoples of the New Testament World* (Singapore: Hendrickson, 2008), 94.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Mounce, 232.

<sup>20</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 352-353.

<sup>21</sup> Drane, 256.

understood this as equally call and commission by emphasizing that his call into the apostleship was without any human influence-not even the twelve (Galatians 1:1, 12, 17; Romans 1:1, 5; I Corinthians 1:1; 4:1; 9:1ff; 15:9).<sup>22</sup> However, the reading in Acts 13 reveals the prophets' and teachers' laying of hands on Paul and Barnabas in obedience to the directives of the Holy Spirit. This incident attracts wider relation to apostleship call and commissioning of Paul especially when emphasizing the stages in conversion, call and commission. Paul spent the rest of his Christian life protecting the church from the zealous campaign of those he regarded as "Judaizers"(Galatians 1:7, 4:17-18; 5:18).<sup>23</sup> He contributed his quota in ensuring that the peaceful outlook of Christianity as was portrayed by those ahead of him is sustained at all cost.

Apostle Paul's story exposes one to the reality of the purity of the Savior's mercy that is greater than all our sins. Later in his days, he would confess, "but God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8NIV). Paul had come to the crescendo of his sin when Christ met him. Toward the end of his life, while in chains for Christ – house arrest- he was quoted as saying: "not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me" (Phil. 3:12NIV). The Greek word translated "took hold" in this passage- *Katalēmpthēn* is from the word *katalambanō* "to lay hold of, "to seize", "to take possession of with eagerness, suddenness... the sense of being eager to grasp."<sup>24</sup> It is in this understanding that Beth Moore concluded that Christ literally snatched Paul by the neck as he would later write unforgettable words to Timothy-his son in the faith: "here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worst" (I Tim 1:15).<sup>25</sup> No wonder he was commissioned with the task of reaching those in darkness, leading them to the light and leading them to receiving forgiveness for their sins.

### **The Post-Converted Paul**

In present age, a new convert or a baby Christian is required to first undergo series of discipleship training that will give him or her primary knowledge of Christian practices, and of course, the requirements for progressive growth therein.

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<sup>22</sup> Hastings, 687.

<sup>23</sup> Simmons, 96.

<sup>24</sup> Mounce, 267.

<sup>25</sup> Moore, 45.

Nevertheless, the case seems different about Paul. He needed not to be taught the scriptures like a Gentile convert would. As a religious observant Jew, thoroughly trained in the knowledge of the scriptures. Belonging to the Pharisee sect- the knowledgeable ones, teachers of the law- as at the point of his conversion, Paul would have acquired the knowledge of the scriptures better than some will do over a lifetime.<sup>26</sup>

The only missing link about his religious consciousness appears to have got bridged at his encounter with the risen Christ. Throughout his ministerial time, all his efforts before a Jewish audience majors on the conviction that Jesus Christ is truly the expected Messiah (Acts 9:22). This he will always do by quoting and interpreting the scriptures – Old Testament – and bringing it to bear on the person of Christ as the fulfillment of the scriptures.<sup>27</sup> It was not easy for him certainly. While the Jews saw him as a traitor, the then Christians would have probably given him a cold reception. First, for the extent he went persecuting them. Second, it is probable to think they would be doubtful about the genuineness of his conversion.<sup>28</sup>

Barnabas played a pivotal role in the establishment of Paul's ministerial feet. He must have been a reputable and respected figure among the believers that he could convince them of the genuineness of Paul's Christian conversion experience. The Joseph renamed Barnabas – son of encouragement-by the disciples<sup>29</sup> offers a good example of should be attitude to new converts. This should serve as a pattern for us present day Christians. Paul successfully transferred his zeal in Judaism to Christianity. By the grace of God, he explored his world with the message of the Gospel- Christ the crucified is the Lord. His ministerial journeys included calls at: Tarsus, Phrygia, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Illyricum, Rome and probably Crete and Spain.<sup>30</sup> He came very late, but he made the most significant impact among his contemporaries. Imagine a New Testament without the influence of Paul. His achievements proclaim him as an unexcelled missionary statesman. His labor of evangelism firmly planted churches in the strategic centers of Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, Achaia and so on. As his imperial missionary strategy was revealed, his foresight led him to select and train promising young talents to carry on the work after him.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Moore, 48.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 219-220.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>30</sup> Deissmann, 199.

<sup>31</sup> Tenney, 631.



## A Swipe at the City Called Tarsus of Cilicia

Apostle Paul was born in Tarsus, the capital city of Cilicia (Acts 21:39; 22:3; 23:34) that became a Roman province around 67BC after she had come under the Persian sway and the Seleucid rulers that governed her from Antioch.<sup>32</sup> The closest Greek word for Cilicia is *kilikia* which although without a “definite meaning,” but could simply be translated as “a place.”<sup>33</sup> Cilicia was a district located south-east of Asia Minor, its north and west was bounded by the Taurus range, on the east by the Amanus range and on the south by the Mediterranean sea.<sup>34</sup> Cicero the orator (51-50BC) was once her governor.<sup>35</sup> Tarsus was seen as the seat of a famous university, higher in reputation than even that of Athens and Alexandria, the only other two of its contemporaries.<sup>36</sup> In Paul’s own witness, it was a city of great historical and civilized influence, a “no ordinary city” (Acts 21:39).

Information regarding the exact time his family got settled in Tarsus is disputable. According to Edward Blaiklock, his family would have been one of the Jewish families that found solace in Cilicia towns notably Tarsus, during the Seleucid ruthless rule in Palestine.<sup>37</sup> Measuring by the account in Acts 15:23, it is probable that the gospel reached Cilicia early; perhaps through Paul (Acts 9:30; Gal. 1:21). He would later confirm the progress of the churches that had been planted there while on his second missionary journey (Acts 15:41). Jews of Cilicia were mentioned among the owners of a certain synagogue at Jerusalem that would arose and disputed with Stephen, setting the tune for eventual first Christian martyr (Acts 6:9).

The early inhabitants of Cilicia must have been the Hittites that had called her by the name *kizuwatna*. By the time the Assyrians gained control over her around ninth century BC, she was called by the name *Hilakku*.<sup>38</sup> Hence, it becomes probable that Cilicia had been in constant modification of name as power changes hands in the Mediterranean world. The exact time the district was called by the name “Cilicia” is subject to dispute. Nevertheless, for the whole of Paul’s lifetime, Cilicia belonged to the united province of Syria-Cilicia (Gal 1:21; Acts 15:23, 41).<sup>39</sup> The combination of Cilicia with Syria and Phoenicia is said

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<sup>32</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 237.

<sup>33</sup> William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 282.

<sup>34</sup> Steven Barabas, “Cilicia” *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), 171.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 172.

<sup>36</sup> Mark Water, *The Baker Encyclopedia of Bible People* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 348.

<sup>37</sup> Edward M. Blaiklock, “Cilicia” *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of The Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 863.

<sup>38</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Paul Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: WM.B. Eerdmans, 1977), 32.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*.

to be for administrative purposes.<sup>40</sup> At the present, Cilicia belongs to the modern day Turkey.<sup>41</sup>

During the New Testament period, Cilicia was very important commercial city controlling the vital trade route between Syria and Asia Minor, running through the Cilician gates. The New Testament account covers only the Roman province Cilicia that stretched from a little east of Corycus to Mt. Amanus, and from the Cilician gates and Anazarbus to the Great Sea. The other portion to which the name was attributed was the client-kingdom of King Antiochus that was under the Suzerainty of Rome. This included Cilicia Tracheia (Rugged Cilicia) to the west, as well as a belt surrounding the Roman province on the north and east, neither of which has as yet been thoroughly explored.<sup>42</sup> Among other factors, the district of Cilicia gained her reputable historical and commercial attention because of her rich geographical location – a fertile plain between Mount Amanus in the south and Mount Tarsus in the north, and a vital trade route between Syria and Asia Minor. Although Paul was a Jew, but he was not born in Palestine unlike most of the first generation of Christians. He was born in a very historically significant city with mingling culture, academic enlightenment and commercial engagements. He utilized and maximized the benefits of enlightenment and exposure he gained from his place of birth during his Christian ministerial days. He was more than a native of Tarsus, he was equally a citizen of Tarsus and a Roman citizen possessed of full rights.

### **The City Called Jerusalem at a Glance**

*Hierousalēm* means “peaceful one, foundation of *shalem*- peace.<sup>43</sup> The Psalmist regarded it as the world’s most significant city (Psalms 87:2-5). From David’s time onward, it is referred to as God’s dwelling place (1Kings 8:13). It is the scene of Christ’s resurrection and (Luke 24) and of his glorious return (Zech 14:5).<sup>44</sup> As a name, Jerusalem dates from at least the 3rd millennium BC. This means the name is pre-Israelite, appearing in the Egypt.<sup>45</sup> It was the focal and most important city in ancient Israel, as it was in the New Testament and as it remains today.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> A. Souter, “Cilicia” *Hastings’ Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Hendrickson, 1998), 142.

<sup>41</sup> Cilicia (Roman Province) <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>. Accessed June 16, 2019.

<sup>42</sup> Souter, 142.

<sup>43</sup> J. B. Payne, “Jerusalem” *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub.House, 1975), 459.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> D. F. Payne, “Jerusalem” *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1962), 567.

<sup>46</sup> Mark Water, *AMG’s Encyclopedia of Bible Facts* (Tennessee: AMG Pub., 2004), 192.

Jerusalem is the chief town of Palestine. It stands on the summit of the ridge of the Judean mountains, at an elevation of 2500 feet above the sea level. The elevated plateau on which the city is built is intersected by deep valleys, defining and subdividing it.<sup>47</sup> It is regarded as sacred because of its association with David and Jesus to Jews and Christians respectively. It is also sacred to Islam because of its traditional associations with Abraham and Mohammad.<sup>48</sup> Conquered by David about 1000BC, it became the capital city of Judah. It was also the central shrine of the united monarchy of Israel, and subsequently of the kingdom of Judah. During the monarchy, the city grew, especially to the north, where the temple was erected by Solomon.<sup>49</sup> During the time of Jesus, king Herod's magnificent restoration of the temple in Jerusalem was taking place and the temple sacrifices flourished. Devout Jewish pilgrims came from all over the world to Jerusalem, especially at festival time, so that the 60,000 inhabitants of Jerusalem were increased to about 250,000.<sup>50</sup>

The centrality of Jerusalem in the life and ministry of the early church is apparent from the beginning. It is the place of rise of the disciples' faith, the first home of the apostles and leaders of the first century church. It is also the starting point from where the new faith would spread to the whole world. Paul's understanding of the flow of his gospel ministry as originating from Jerusalem through Illyricum is echoed in Romans 15:19. It becomes a common phenomenon, especially during the apostolic age, that the gospel began in Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). Regarding Paul's initial contact with the city of Jerusalem depends on how one interprets Acts 22:3. The threefold *born...brought up...educated* is a well-attested literary unit that provides biographical information of the birth to teenage years of a person's life. The reading in Acts 7: 20-22 reveals this trilogy in that Moses was *born...brought up* as a nursing child by Pharaoh's daughter and then he became *educated* in the wisdom of Egypt (Exodus 2:6-9).<sup>51</sup>

According to Acts 22:3, it becomes revealed that, although Paul was born in Tarsus of Cilicia, nevertheless, he was moved to Jerusalem at the early years of his life. Specifically, in fairness to his personal witness, the purpose of this movement was for his theological training *under the feet of Gamaliel*. Consequently, Jerusalem became significant as the

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<sup>47</sup> R.A.S. Macalister, "Jerusalem" *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Hendrickson Pub., 1998), 437.

<sup>48</sup> D.F. Payne, "Jerusalem" *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 529.

<sup>49</sup> D.F. Payne, "Jerusalem" *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 529.

<sup>50</sup> Mark Water, *AMG's Encyclopedia of Bible Facts*, 192.

<sup>51</sup> R.H. Stein, "Jerusalem" *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 464.

See Stein's article section of *Jerusalem and the Early Years of Paul* in the DPL.

temple city, the seat and city of God, center for theological enterprise of no contemporary equality. Notwithstanding, the city does not enjoy significance by virtue of its natural features or situation. These were in fact, a hindrance and might well have condemned the city to obscurity rather development and prominence. Natural features favoured other places in Palestine for the capital rather than Jerusalem. It is not at the central point in the country and is also hard to access in the mountains of Judah. Its rise to prominence it attained was not due to nature, but owing to historical events. This rise took place over many centuries and was not uniform. There were frequent and long periods of recession.<sup>52</sup>

For Paul, too, Jerusalem was and remains the center of Christianity. This does not mean that he actually works in the city of Jerusalem, ministerial wise, but that Jerusalem remains integral and significant aspect of shaping of his world as reflected in his life and ministry. When he recounts on his apostolic work enroute to Rome, he describes it as extending “apo Hierousalēm kai kyklō mechri tou Illyrikou” Romans 15:19. Though he never worked as a missionary in Jerusalem, yet, he put it first here. Thus, the apostles, Paul inclusive, are always linked with Jerusalem, the Holy city of God, the center for spiritual vibrancy, the city of people of God.

### **Educational System in Greco-Roman World**

Education connotes knowledge impartation; it is better done when the one imparting is judged to be higher in knowledge than the one(s) being imparted. In such enabling atmosphere that will see the student(s) grow in knowledge and the teacher increase in understanding. Jewish concept of education majors on the study of *Torah* and its interpretation. It starts from one’s home at early stage and reaches the crescendo when one attends any of the designed schools in Jerusalem where the *Torah* and its rabbinic interpretations are thoroughly taught.<sup>53</sup> There is little or no element of secularism in Jewish understanding of what it means to be learned. Therefore, it becomes difficult to accustom Paul’s general manifestation of academic enlightenment – both scriptural and secular – to his home and Jerusalem training. Even in his own testimony, his Jerusalem training was strictly scripturally inclined (Acts 22:3).

In the New Testament world – Greco-Roman world – educational theory and practice were essentially Hellenistic, with philosophy – the rational skill for knowledge acquisition – the

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<sup>52</sup> George E. Fohrer, “Siwn, vIerousalhm, `Ierousoluma, `Ierousolumithj” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: WM.B. Eerdmans, 1964), 300-301.

<sup>53</sup> Victor H. Matthews, *Manners & Customs in the Bible* (Singapore: Hendrickson , 2006), 201.

main focus.<sup>54</sup> The Greeks were more in control of education and culture in the Greco-Roman world while the Romans were more concerned with governance. The curriculum for institutions of higher learning in Greco-Roman world include rhetoric, philosophy, medicine and law. Rome was the center for legal training during New Testament times while that of medicine include Alexandria, Cos, Pergamus, Smyrna, Corinth and Ephesus.<sup>55</sup>

The most reputable career during this time was the study of rhetoric which is often referred to as the serious higher education. It a discipline considered as normative by scholars like Cicero and Quintilian and about which is designed five basic steps of speech preparation: invention of ideas, arrangement, style, memorization and delivery.<sup>56</sup> It appears that students of rhetoric were prepared majorly for excellent public speech but supposedly, there should be more to it. Another reputable career of this period is the study of philosophy. Although there existed diverse views of whether philosophy was classified under secondary education, higher education or both.

Talking about methodology, information available to the researcher has it that, more than formally attending a school for comprehensive training of any career during this time, there existed other ways one can acquire knowledge about specific discipline. Although these other ways may not guarantee in-depth knowledge of the subject matter, but it could prove sufficient for meeting the idea of knowing something about everything. This kind “shallow” knowledge can help one out of tight situation and presents one as very knowledgeable and worthy of commendation. In line with the above, there were three major specific ways learning could take place during this time:

First, through wandering lecturers and preachers that move about. They summon people’s attention and deliver free lectures which in turn, is capable of winning a follower for the team. These kinds of teams were the same as Paul encountered in Athens – the Epicureans and the Stoics (Acts 17:18). Second, an aspiring or a serious person might attend the lectures that private philosophy teachers gave on a regular basis. Third, one might study any discipline in an established institution.<sup>57</sup> There could also be great friendship influence. One that has friends among the graduates of the Tarsus University can be influenced by his friends in learning and understanding. Thus, it becomes very reasonable to argue that

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<sup>54</sup>Matthews, 201.

<sup>55</sup> John T. Townsend, “Education in Greco-Roman World” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary Vol. 2* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 312-314.

<sup>56</sup> Townsend, 314-315.

<sup>57</sup> Townsend, 315.

rhetorical or philosophical allusions in a Jewish or Christian writing should not imply that the writer had deep knowledge of its background. However, it should be enough to give credit to the writer or preacher as one who is vast in knowledge and understanding.

This information is judged very helpful because, it will be very difficult to argue that Paul could not have fitted into any of these possible ways of acquiring learning during his time. Biblical information of his ministerial career portrays him as a very serious and zealous individual. Very knowledgeable and excellent student while in training and of course, a learned person. One's environment has great influence on one's perception of life entirely. Since he was not taken to Tarsus, but he was born and raised there. Biblically speaking, his moving to Jerusalem did not spell his last contact with his nativity town, he kept shuttling between Jerusalem and Tarsus even after his conversion and during his ministerial journeys. Paul would have availed himself of the best learning opportunities provided by the environment into which he was born. What a competitive and enlightened world of his. These exposures would later prove very fruitful in his ministerial achievements as he was not afraid to confront any group of people. He did so in a manner so irresistible that he would be required to be heard the second time.

Nevertheless, by available information to this writer, this is not to present apostle Paul as knowing in detail the background of the rhetorical allusions found in his writings or sermons as he can be said of the *Torah*.<sup>58</sup> Notwithstanding, credit should be given to the man that thrives in all environments, whose ministerial attainments left one to wonder where were other apostles? Whose write-up, an apostle like Peter would judge as "difficult" to understand. He was a spiritual man and a learned person. He made perfect integration of both and he had his call into the ministry proven undoubtedly, thereby by becoming a pattern to us contemporary preachers of the gospel.

### **Exegetical Analysis of Acts 17: 22 – 28**

Apostle Paul's Boldness (17: 22a)

*Paul, while standing in the midst of the Areopagus said*

It is arguable that Paul's missionary agenda could be without inclusion of Athens initially. Nevertheless, while waiting for the arrival of his traveling team members, he took time to survey the city of Athens. This speech before the council of the Areopagus –the council that met in ancient times on Mars' Hill for the purpose of supervision of religious and

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<sup>58</sup> Townsend, 314-315.

educational matters- was presented after Paul had spent some times in the city. Having preached in the synagogue on the Sabbath (17:17a) and in the market place during the week (17: 17b). As he gained more attention from the people, the two most prominent schools of philosophy of the New Testament era became encountered with him. Although they could not make meaning out of what he was saying, nevertheless, they showed interest for further hearing by inviting him to speak before this highly prestigious and revered council. It appears the curiosity of these philosophers have got the better of them (17: 18-21).

The Epicureans, as named after their founder –Epicurus (342-271 BC),<sup>59</sup> believed that gods have no interest in the created world. To them, the chief end of life therefore, was pleasure. This was to be sought in a happy and tranquil life, life that is free from pain, trouble or fear, especially the fear of death.<sup>60</sup> The stoics, founded by Zeno (C. 300 B.C),<sup>61</sup> believed that god was the world’s soul that indwelt all things. To them, happy life was that as lived in accordance with nature. They believe that all men were brothers since god was in all men.<sup>62</sup> Many Stoics were men of high moral principle and their ethical system has been commonly supposed to have a close connection with Christian morality. But the morality of Stoicism is essentially based on pride, as against that of Christianity on humility. One upholds individual independence, the other, in absolute faith –dependence in another.<sup>63</sup> The knowledge of these two philosophical groups vis-à-vis their teachings and beliefs, will be very crucial in understanding why apostle Paul presented his speech before the council the way he did. While it is disputable what exactly the intension of these groups were when they took Paul before the council, but to Paul, it was another opportunity to sow more seeds of evangelism. The situation surrounding the public gospel speech was highly tensed as all the Athenians and the foreigners that lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas (17:21). Therefore, when the floor was opened for Paul, he knew that it meant a lot on how composed and convincing he needed to be.

The council of the Areopagus was the most ancient institution of Athens. It was founded according to tradition, over a thousand years before the city’s patron goddess- Athene. When Athens assumed democracy around the fifth century B.C., it caused deflection of the power of high court. Nevertheless, it retained reputable moral prestige. Evidently, at this time, one of its functions was to examine and issue license for public lectures.<sup>64</sup> Acts 17:

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<sup>59</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 369.

<sup>60</sup> George E. Ladd, “The Acts” *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), 1156.

<sup>61</sup> Unger, 1221.

<sup>62</sup> Ladd, 1156.

<sup>63</sup> Unger, 1221.

<sup>64</sup> F. F. Bruce, “Acts of The Apostle” *The New Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: W. E, 1958), 923.

22 starts with the Greek word *Statheis* that is translated “stood” in aorist passive participle masculine nominative singular, from the lexical form of *istēmi*<sup>65</sup> a Greek vocabulary that occurs 160 places in the New Testament in a variety of contexts with a number of nuances.<sup>66</sup> As used in this text, among other meanings, could be translated as “to set up, to establish, to balance, to place oneself firm, to stand firm, to be well situated”.<sup>67</sup> Hence, the perception is that, before the council, Paul was very composed and bold. He seized the platform as offered. He was very convincing and without fear. He gained the needed self establishment and stage seizure. For a public speech of such magnitude, having created great expectations from the people before this second hearing, it becomes worthy of emphasis how this missionary kicked off the defense of his religious position before this highly esteemed ancient council. It was no less the required manner of boldness and self composure. It becomes arguable that this manifestation contributed to the overall success of the gospel debate. By *standing in the midst of the council*, Paul, who once watched a man, Stephen, stoned to death on the account of defense of faith, knew what deadly the business can be. Perhaps, he was carefree of the possible consequences of the outcome of his acts. There can never be a better way to present the gospel message than doing it as something worth dying for if need be.

Apostle Paul’s apologetics (17: 22b- 23a)

*Men, Athenians, I perceive how very religious people you are in everything. For while passing through and looking at your objects of worship, I also noticed an alter on which it had been written TO AN UNKNOWN GOD*

As the gospel debate begins, it becomes very important and rewarding that apostle Paul begins apologetically. Trying to gain more ground, he appreciated the people’s religious consciousness. It was said to be customary to begin a speech by complimenting the hearers in the opening exordium as designed to secure their favor.<sup>68</sup> The commendation in this context should be interpreted that the people were very religiously observant. Generally, to be religiously conscious implies to believe that there is someone or something that is transcendent, to whom man’s sense of worship and reverence should be accorded, not that he agreed with their religion.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Cleon L. Rogers JR, and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 275.

<sup>66</sup> Stephen D. Renn, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (New York: Hendrickson 2005), 929.

<sup>67</sup> Karl Feyerabend, *Langenscheidt’s Pocket Greek Dictionary* (Berlin: langenscheidt KG, N.D.), 198.

<sup>68</sup> Craig S. Keener, 373.

<sup>69</sup> Keener, 373.



Paul's presentation was very modestly. He told them that he observed it as he passed and saw their objects of devotion. That way, it was publicized, and he could not forbear seeing it. By implication, there was no ground for offence of any kind.<sup>70</sup> The Greek adjectival vocabulary that is translated as 'very religious' for this work is *deisidaimonesterous* from the lexical form of *deisidaimōn*. It is used here in the comparative degree sense, that is, 'more religious than usual'.<sup>71</sup> Among other possible translations, in this context, *deisidaimonesterous* is better translated as "very religious" than "too superstitious" which is also another possible translation.<sup>72</sup> Notwithstanding, the dynamism of this vocabulary is revealed in the fact that it could be used to either congratulate people or criticize them depending on whether the one using it included oneself in the circle of individuals described.<sup>73</sup> Here, it appears the Athenians would be doubtful of which meaning to imply until Paul progressed. Thus, by beginning in this positive manner, Paul was able to win the public's trust and as a result, he gained further hearing for the rest of what he had to say.<sup>74</sup> The learned Athenians nursed various conjectures concerning this altar that is dedicated to the "unknown God". Some take the meaning to imply "to the God whose honour it is to be unknown" and that they intended the God of the Jews whose name is ineffable, and whose nature is unsearchable.<sup>75</sup> The heathen people referred to the Jewish God as "the God without a name".<sup>76</sup>

#### Apostle Paul's indictment with an appeal (17:23b)

*Then, the one whom you worship in ignorance, I have come to make him known to you*

Among other achievements so far, one major and essential point that Paul has made in this public gospel speech was the establishment of the fact that he was not bringing a new religion or new god to them. Rather, he was only appealing for the opportunity to put right their religious practices regarding the same God they seem to have revered in ignorance.

The genesis of establishing acceptable worship practice to the God Most High is imbedded in coming to the knowledge and understanding of him. With all the grounds that were already watered prior to this point, it became not too difficult for Paul to indict the people.

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<sup>70</sup> Mathew Henry, 1706.

<sup>71</sup> Rogers, 275.

<sup>72</sup> George E. Ladd, 1157.

<sup>73</sup> *NIV Study Bible*, 1861.

<sup>74</sup> Kisau, 1331.

<sup>75</sup> Henry, 1706.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

Diplomatically, he accused them of ignorance and wrong religious practice. He did not only accuse them of wrong religious practice, more than that, he also appealed for the permission to correct their devotional practices. Against the people's presupposition that he may be setting grounds for new gods, he actually wanted to reduce them to the knowledge of one true and only living God.<sup>77</sup> The people's religious zeal will not allow them to omit from their worship any deity with whom they might not be acquainted. Paul argued that indeed, there was one whom they did not know, and this one he offered to declare to them.<sup>78</sup> It becomes noteworthy of the wisdom and diplomacy in the speech delivery of this great man of God. It should not be seen as an easy task to lay charges of ignorance to the highly esteemed, learned and knowledgeable Athenians. However, through the help and leading of the Holy Spirit, coupled with the convincing exhibition by the apostle to the fact that he was well informed and exposed in the literacy and speech delivery skills of the world he lived in, he was able to minister to the learned Athenians. He told them the mind of Christ for them without necessarily hurting their status quo in all, thereby managed to keep his head above waters.

Apostle Paul made manifest the five basic steps that made up rhetoric curriculum on public speech training –invention of ideas, arrangement of ideas, style, memorization and delivery.<sup>79</sup> Often times, one may possess the zeal for evangelism, but exposure on the knowledge of the required synergy for the kingdom business may not match that of the inward zeal. It goes beyond wanting to do it, yielding to the leading of the Holy Spirit with knowledge diverse means of doing it is equally as essential and complementing to the zeal itself.

The Message (17: 24-25)

*The God that made the world and all things in it, this one, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in handmade temples*

*Nor is he served by hands of men as having need for anything. For he gives life and breath and all things to all*

Here the evangelist began the main kingdom business proper. Good invention, apologetic approach through indictment with an appeal, all were pointing toward one goal that is, to present the gospel message to the people. Paul presented God to the people from the very

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<sup>77</sup> Henry, 1706.

<sup>78</sup> Ladd, 1157.

<sup>79</sup> John T. Townsend "Education in Greeco-Roman World" *The Anchor Bible Commentary vol 2* (New York: Double day, 1992), 312-314.

scratch, as the God that created the whole universe and everything therein. The Lord of heavens and earth. God that does not require their kind of handmade temples nor other human services or help. Since he himself had made all mankind and indeed everything from the very beginning, there is possibly nothing the created can offer the Creator.<sup>80</sup>

Paul then argued that God should not be worshipped after the common manner of idolatrous fashion of the people or of the pagan world in general. He further expatiated that, whereas prior to this time, God had overlooked the ignorance of the people, but forthwith, it will count against anyone that refuses to repent of his evil ways. For the period of ignorance is gone. In his efforts, Paul presented God as the great benefactor of the whole creation. The one that gives life, breath and indeed all things to all. This becomes reflected in the point that all creatures are fashioned to be forever dependent on God for survival by drawing their sustenance from him. For as the meanest of the children of men live upon him, so the greatest. Even the wise philosophers and the mighty potentates cannot live and survive without the grace that comes from the God Almighty.<sup>81</sup> More than giving life and breath to all, he gives all things needful for the support of life.<sup>82</sup> He cannot dwell in any structure as erected by men. Neither does he stand in need of anything that human service can afford, for he is the very source of life.<sup>83</sup>

The Epicureans would have agreed with Paul that God needs nothing from human beings. The stoics would have agreed with him that there is a Supreme Being that is the source of life and the determinant of when and where the peoples of the earth should live. However, both alike found that his teaching about the resurrection was not worthy of serious consideration.<sup>84</sup> Some Greek schools of thought tentatively taught the immortality of the soul, but the idea of bodily resurrection repelled the population as a whole. For the Greeks believe that the body only encumbered the superior soul and so, it is done with at the point of death while the soul is liberated.<sup>85</sup> Notwithstanding, Paul's argument on the fact that God created man as a union of a tangible body and an intangible soul makes the claim or idea of bodiless existence of the soul an incomplete and imperfect notion. As he maintains firm grip on his belief and emphasis on Jesus' bodily resurrection.<sup>86</sup> The fact remains that

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<sup>80</sup> Kisau, 1331.

<sup>81</sup> Henry, 1706.

<sup>82</sup> Henry, 1706.

<sup>83</sup> Ladd, 1157.

<sup>84</sup> Don Fleming, *Bridgeway Bible Commentary* (Canada: Bridgeway, 2005), 476.

<sup>85</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, "The Course of Paul's Ministry" *The Eerdmans Companion to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2011), 618.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

the gospel had always been preached with the idea that some may believe. This case is no difference as regard the evangelism efforts of Paul in Athens. Some people believed, some other people needed more time to think it out and through.

The Creator and his Immanence (17: 26 – 27)

*And he made men of all nations of one man, to live on all the face of the earth, ordaining fore-appointed season and boundaries of their dwelling.*

*So that men would seek the Lord, perhaps, they might feel his presence and find him, although indeed, he is not far from anyone of us.*

Furthermore, Paul proclaimed God as one that caused the human race to spring from one man. Providentially, ordering man's boundaries of space and time so that men might seek after him and find him within a relatively ordered life.<sup>87</sup> This view would not do well to the cherished Athenian belief that they themselves were sprung from the soil of Attica.<sup>88</sup>

Jewish people usually spoke of God as a father to his people – Deuteronomy 32:6; Isaiah 63:16; 64: 8; Jeremiah 3:4. However, Greek speaking Jews –especially those abroad- and some second century Christian writers spoke of God as the world's father in the sense of Creator, the same as used here.<sup>89</sup> Since God is the Creator of the whole universe, by implication, all creatures did spring from a common source. All are dependent on him for life, sustenance and survival. Hence, the goodness of God to mankind as made manifest in the magnificent created world should compel man to seek him.<sup>90</sup> He that appointed the earth as a habitation for the children of men, the same has given them a distinction of habitations upon the earth surface. The particular habitations in which our lot is cast are of God's appointing. This compels mankind to accommodate and tolerate one another to the habitations we are in, and make the best of that which is given to humanity.<sup>91</sup>

Moreover, Paul argued that God is not far from the created world. It becomes the point of duty on the part of the creature to seek after the Creator. This means that the creator is reachable and to that, he is not far from us. This assertion underlines the fact that God is interested in the world he created. Particularly humanity that he had chosen to create in his own image. This implies that humanity is created equal before God irrespective of race,

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<sup>87</sup> Ernest H. Trenchard, "Acts" *The International Bible Commentary*, 1298.

<sup>88</sup> Bruce, 924.

<sup>89</sup> Keener, 374.

<sup>90</sup> Ladd, 1157.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

color and gender. The differences that exist should be seen as part of God's plans concerning mankind.<sup>92</sup> His chief aim for ordering the universe the way it is was to encourage all mankind to seek after him. Yet, he is not far from humanity.

### Paul's Underpinning Philosophy of Evangelism (17: 28)

*For in him we live, move and exist; as also some of your poets have said, for we are also his offspring*

Paul had been a student of his cultural milieu and when he became a follower of Christ, he made good investment of his wide intellectual knowledge toward the actualization of his ministerial goals.

In the view of the great evangelist, the understanding that God is not far from us becomes reflected in the fact that, in him we live and move, and have our being. Then, he quoted Athenian poets, acknowledging their work and using it as a bridge to declare the gospel truth that all mankind are products of God's careful creative acts.<sup>93</sup> By implication, Paul drew on the diverse richness of Athenian culture to fill the gaps in their true religious poverty.<sup>94</sup> He made known to them the 'unknown God' to whom an altar had been dedicated. Having the case for Creator-Sustainer for whom all humanity gropes, Paul foretells the final judgment by the resurrected Christ.<sup>95</sup> This quotation from Epimenides is of interest for several reasons: first, Epimenides was supposed in Greek legend to have advised the erection of anonymous altars in and around Athens. Second, a further line from the same context is quoted in Titus 1: 12.<sup>96</sup> In the context as referred, Epimenides was said to have addressed the supreme god, that is, in poetical dialect sense, "they fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high one, the Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies! But thou art not dead; forever thou art risen and alive, for in thee we live and move and have our being."<sup>97</sup>

Thus, the apostle used this to illustrate the position of his message that God is transcendent, he created all things and cannot be created by man. Nothing exists except that as he created. By this, he opined that all men are God's offspring, all are dependent on him for life and sustenance. There is a biblical doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God and brotherhood

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<sup>92</sup> Kisau, 1331.

<sup>93</sup> Kisau, 1331.

<sup>94</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, 618.

<sup>95</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, 618.

<sup>96</sup> Bruce, 924.

<sup>97</sup> Bruce, 924.

of man that is resting upon the fact of common creation, rather than upon a spiritual relationship even as this text indicates.<sup>98</sup> Since God is the creator of all mankind, to identify the Creator with the work of the creature becomes the very height of manifestation of folly and the depth of sin.<sup>99</sup>

In a nutshell, a meaningful life becomes that as dependent upon God. A snake without scale shows its in vain. Since *in him we live*, we live only by his fatherly love and care and indeed, by other communicable attributes of him without which, we cannot survive on our own. Since *in him we move*, in like manner, his initial breath of life that makes us “living souls” initiated the grace of our bodies being carried and moved about. The genesis of every sense of human existence is traced to him. Since *in him we have our being*, by implication, not that only from him we had it at first. However, in him we have it still. We were and still are of such a noble rank of being that are capable of knowing and enjoying his goodness. We are not thrust into the meanness of brutes, nor the misery of devils.<sup>100</sup>

By quoting a saying of one of the Greek poets, Aratus, a native of Cilicia, Paul’s countryman, who, speaking of the heathen Jupiter, that is, in the poetical dialect, the supreme god, says of him, *for we are also his offspring*.<sup>101</sup> Paul applied the people’s rich cultural exposure that is gleaned from their revered poet to make underneath support that corroborated his gospel message. By this it appears not only that Paul was himself a scholar, but that human learning is both ornamental and serviceable to a gospel minister, especially for the convincing of those that are without. For it enables the gospel preacher to beat them at their own game, and to cut off Goliath’s head with his own sword.<sup>102</sup> It is honorable to man that he is created in the image and likeness of God. Nevertheless, the opposite becomes the case in man’s attempt to represent God after the likeness of man’s own physique. He is not in the structure of man’s body. His love to humanity is not in reciprocating sense. For he requires nothing from man other than to fear him, seek after him, know him, obey him and keep his commandments. That is the whole responsibility of man to his Creator.

Apostle Paul made practical application of his message by calling on the Athenians to repent of their sins of idolatry. He invited them to accept the message of Lordship of Jesus Christ and avoid the final judgment on the whole created universe. The reading in 17:29-

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<sup>98</sup> Ladd, 1157.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Henry, 1707.

<sup>101</sup> Henry, 1707.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

34 may not be enough to give us the full account of the fruits of this great evangelism in Athens. However, it did inform the reader that the gospel debate was not without profit. Certain Dionysius, who himself was a member of the council, and a woman named Damaris with a number of others were said to have believed in the gospel message and become followers of Paul (17: 34NIV).

## **Conclusion**

The mystic interplay between spiritual maturity and academic excellence as prerequisite for Gospel ministerial efficiency can never be over stressed. Apostle Paul becomes a very good example to the point that god balance must be stricken between spiritual vibrancy and sound scholarship. This becomes the strong foundation upon which a significant Gospel ministry is built. It underscores the place of formal theological or ministerial training that takes exposure to general fields of learning into account. Through the help and leading of the Holy Spirit, coupled with the convincing exhibition by the apostle to the fact that he was well informed and exposed in the literacy and speech delivery skills of the world he lived in, he was able to minister to the learned Athenians and managed to keep his head above waters at the same time.

One major and outstanding reference to the maturity (both spiritual and academic) Paul exhibited in this Gospel public speech is the point that he never mentioned the name, Jesus Christ. When it becomes mandatory to mention the name in verse 31 while talking about judgment, righteousness and resurrection, the closest he came was *a man appointed by God to oversee about the judgment of all mankind, and concerning this God has given assurance by raising him (the man) from the dead*. A critical mind would argue that Paul was extremely conscious of his choice of words before this learned, religious and yet, deadly group. Paul got perfect reading of the environment and atmosphere for this speech. The approach would certainly be different before a Jewish audience. More than spirituality, these are benefits and manifestations of sound knowledge exposure. The thesis that runs through this article remains that it takes good general knowledge exposure and yielding to the leading of the Holy Spirit to making significant contributions in the kingdom business. The same as seen of the man called Paul, whose ministerial patterns and recorded achievements will remain a pointer to generations after generations, until Christ returns.

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