

Acts 17:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So Paul departed from among them.

Analysis

So Paul departed from among them—After his Mars Hill address to the Areopagus, Paul left Athens (ἐξῆλθεν, *exēlthen*, 'went out') apparently without establishing a church or staying longer. The abrupt departure (ἐκ μέσου αὐτῶν, *ek mesou autōn*, 'from the midst of them') contrasts with his typical pattern of extended ministry. Some scholars see this as discouragement; others note that Athens' philosophical pride and religious syncretism made it resistant to the gospel.

The phrase **from among them** emphasizes physical separation from the Areopagus council and the gathered philosophers. Unlike other cities where Paul's preaching sparked either revival or riot, Athens produced a muted response—polite dismissal rather than passionate opposition or acceptance. This may explain why Paul later told the Corinthians he determined to know nothing but 'Jesus Christ, and him crucified' (1 Corinthians 2:2)—perhaps learning that philosophical argumentation, while not wrong, was insufficient without the Spirit's convicting power.

Historical Context

Athens in AD 51 was past its political prime but remained the intellectual capital of the Roman world. The Areopagus (Mars Hill) was both a location and a council that heard new philosophies. Paul's speech masterfully engaged Stoic and Epicurean thought while pointing to the true God, yet Acts records only a handful of converts. The city's devotion to philosophy and hundreds of idols (Paul noted an

altar 'TO THE UNKNOWN GOD') created a culture simultaneously curious and resistant.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How should we balance intellectual apologetics with the 'foolishness of preaching' that relies on the Spirit's power?
2. What can we learn from Paul's willingness to leave a prestigious city like Athens after limited response, rather than measuring success by cultural influence?
3. In what ways might philosophical sophistication actually hinder genuine gospel receptivity in your context?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	οὕτως	ὁ	Παῦλος	ἐξῆλθεν	ἐκ	μέσου	αὐτῶν
So	G3779	G3588	Paul	departed	from	among	them
G2532			G3972	G1831	G1537	G3319	G846

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