



Confidence
in the Gospel

As part of the Evangelical Alliance's *Confidence in the Gospel* initiative we are hosting a series of five national consultations to wrestle with significant and timely issues relating to the gospel.

To ensure that as many people as possible can engage with this programme, the talks are being filmed and made available online.

Why not watch some of the videos, and use the questions provided, to explore these vital subjects with your small group or leadership team?

For more information, videos and resources visit eauk.org/confidence

Daniel Strange

is the academic vice principal at Oak Hill and lecturer in culture, religion and public theology. His PhD thesis, *The Possibility of Salvation among the Unevangelised*, has been published by Paternoster Press.

Synopsis

Paul's speech to the Areopagus (Acts 17) is bad news. It doesn't talk about God's love or grace, it talks about judgement. Then, when he does talk about the resurrection, it's to point to the coming judgement! It doesn't mention the cross and neither does it mention the name Jesus – only 'he' at the very end.

Actually, Paul's speech is not expounding the gospel, rather it is commending the gospel; drawing attention to its ultimacy and urgency. The point is this; you will not understand the good news of Jesus and his resurrection unless there is a context to it. This is what Paul provides to the Athenians.

Paul's attitude: He is repulsed by what he sees of this city submerged by idolatry. He is provoked and he is distressed. The whole of Luke / Acts is about the New Exodus and the theme of that is an anti-idol polemic. What we see in Acts 17 is the climax of this and it acts as the discursive framing for Acts 18; the anger toward idolatry frames the gospel message.

Paul's approach: There is a comparison and collision of worldviews. Paul recognised that in order for the resurrection to be understood he needed to set the context. He introduces who God is, what he is like and the Christian view of history. It's only in the context of the Christian worldview that the gospel makes sense. Worldview thinking has to be part of gospel proclamation.

Paul's appeal: It's not just a call to repentance; it's a command to repentance. Again, it's quite negative; it's bad news – The Day of the Lord, a day of wrath is coming and the resurrection is used as proof that judgement is coming and that Jesus is the judge. This should be our appeal because idolatry has consequences and we have to take seriously the prospect of an eternity in hell.

But, of course, it's also good news, because we can turn from these things towards the living God.

Questions

for small groups

- 1) When talking about the good news of Jesus, do we spend enough time introducing the bad news first?
- 2) How should we go about talking about the bad news? What does a balanced approach look like?
- 3) What are some of the misconceptions our friends, family and colleagues have about God? Why is it important that we address these when we are sharing the gospel?

for leadership teams

- 1) What do we consider to be the main challenges to us as a Church in light of the issues raised in this talk?
- 2) What does it mean to take into consideration the worldview of the seekers we encounter?
- 3) What are three ways we need to improve when it comes to providing a fuller context for the gospel? ie. How do we need to commend as well as expound the gospel?