

Week 08
045/320

Transforming Daily
“... *his spirit was provoked* ...”
Acts 17:16

Luke says this of the apostle Paul. He says that Paul’s spirit was provoked. Why was Paul’s spirit provoked? His spirit was provoked for the same reason every believer’s spirit ought to be provoked. The town he was entering into was given over to idols. In plain language, Paul was upset that the town didn’t worship God nor recognize His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, but instead worshipped false gods and things crafted of man’s hands. In fact they didn’t know who to worship. They were polytheists. Oversimplified, it means that because they didn’t know in what or who to believe, fear caused them to worship everyone and anything.

Paul knew the truth. He had the truth. He preached the truth. Therefore, seeing that they didn’t have the truth, nor exercised faith in the truth, Paul was provoked in at least two ways. I suspect what set Paul off first was the effrontery of the Athenians’ practices against God, and secondly, the outright ignorance of the people to have some awareness of something or someone greater than themselves and yet attribute that awareness to idols and multiple false gods. It should set every believer off.

Every once in a while I will come across someone who wants to argue that there is no God or that Christ isn’t the only way to heaven. That would be fine if they stopped there, but they go on to argue that another religion or false god is the only way or at least another way to heaven or nirvana or whatever else they think is their final destination. The problem in many cases is that they don’t know anything about Christianity and their argument is from ignorance. They have enough sense to know that there must be something greater than themselves, but they don’t know what that or who that is. In their ignorance (as I did before I came to faith in Christ, and as my father did before me), they rule out Christianity on pretense without knowledge. But to play it safe, just in case there is something or someone “out there,” they attribute their existence or belief in some false god or idol.

I was one of those people before I came to faith. I set off a whole group of believers who were trying to win me to Christ (and ultimately they did, Praise God!). When they would share their faith with me, in my ignorance I would resist what I didn’t understand and make claims (as my father did before me) that I believed that there was probably a supreme being somewhere out there, but I had no regard for or understanding of a heaven or hell. I had no understanding of sin or righteousness.

What about you? Are you one of those people who doesn’t understand Christianity or the teaching of Scripture, but resists and rejects both on pretense? Do you claim that there is something or someone out there, but can’t quite explain what or who it is? Perhaps you’re like Paul and your heart is broken because of all the paganism and idolatry that seems to be running wild and out of control today? If so, keep your eyes on Jesus. Lift your prayers without ceasing. Recommit yourself to the efforts of personal discipleship and soul winning because that’s what God would have us to do, and that’s exactly what Paul did when his spirit was provoked.