

Week 08
050/315

Transforming Daily
“... very religious ...”
Acts 17:22

Paul starts his polemics very democratically. He is actually using the old sandwich method of admonishment and rebuke. He points out something positive about them, then points out something negative about them, then points out what he wants them to change or learn. Paul knew that the Athenians weren't going to fall by a frontal attack, so he outflanked them. Basically he presents an argument so “Athenian,” and so logical, that they only have two choices. Both choices are exercised.

As a result of Paul's tactics, most of the listeners graciously bowed out from any further explanation regarding their religious beliefs in light of his. However, some agreed to hear more. Those that agreed to hear more came to faith. What would have happened had Paul gone in with his family sized, “King James” (it didn't exist then, not until 1611), version of the Bible and started spiritually lopping off heads? It wouldn't have been pretty. He would have been right, but he would have won the battle and lost the war.

What is the lesson? One of the lessons is that there are many, probably most, people who are religious, but not necessarily born again. They may very well attend a worship service of some type and do it more than we do, but they are placing their faith in the wrong God. The Bible is very clear on this matter. There is only one way to heaven, one way to the heavenly Father, and that is through Jesus Christ (John 14:6). But how do we tell people about the Way and not get in the way personally?

Oversimplified, you and I are to hide behind the cross. What I try to do, and I am not always successful at it, is to make ministry personal, but don't take it personally, whether I receive persecution or praise. Praise from those whom we share the faith is not usually the response we have to look out for. The persecution is the response we have to be on guard for, and not for the reasons you probably think I mean. We need to be careful not to let someone's negative response to our sharing the gospel with them provoke us into conflict because we took their response as a personal insult (I am an authority on how to fail at this). Through my failures the Lord has revealed to me that I am to make ministry personal, but not to take it personally, whether persecution or praise. No doubt, it is easier said than done.

Does this sound like you? Are you easily provoked by those whom you share the gospel with, those that reject you and what you are saying? Or are you weak in your presentation of the gospel and easily agreeable because of the way those whom you share the gospel with praise you and say wonderful things about you? Be careful either way, because you will find more people whom you witness to don't know our God, and yet they are very religious.