

STIRRED UP SAINTS

Acts 17:16-34

INTRODUCTION

- Different things stir up people
- Often we get stirred up over things we shouldn't get stirred up over
- But often we *don't* get stirred up over things that should stir us
- But today we're going to look at a man who had a soft heart and whose spirit was stirred by what he saw around him
- The Greek word for "stirred" (*paroxuneto*) indicates "provoked, agitated, irritated, distressed, disturbed, troubled, grieved"
- There is a stirred-up spirit that finds its source in our own carnal hearts; our natural base passions
- But Paul's was a heavenly stirring worked in him by the Holy Ghost
- A characteristic of godly men and women throughout history has been a heart that is moved by what they see going on around them, particularly sinful behaviour, and resolves to stand against it
- Moses (Exodus 32:19-20); Phinehas (Numbers 25:6-11); Elijah (1 Kings 19:10); Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:9); David (1 Samuel 17:45-47); the Lord Jesus Christ (John 2:13-17)
- The events in this chapter took place during Paul's Second Missionary Journey around 50AD
- Paul was in Athens, waiting for his companions to arrive so they could start some ministry there, but while he waited something happened
- What he saw in that city stirred up the spirit within him and caused him to act upon what he saw

Consider three things that happen when a believer is stirred up for the Lord. He will be:

I. PERCEPTIVE TO SIN (16)

- A. Sin within our own lives must first be dealt with
 - 1. Judge self before others (Matthew 7:1-5; John 7:24)
 - 2. Through prayer (Psalms 139:23)
 - 3. Through the word (Psalms 119:11)
- B. Sin in others must then be dealt with
 - 1. We are to reprove the works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11)
 - 2. To ignore evil is to promote it
 - 3. Sin must be seen as God sees it (Romans 7:13)

II. PASSIONATE FOR SOULS (17-21)

- A. A concern for the souls of others is evidence of a work of grace
 - 1. The woman of Samaria (John 4:28-29)
 - 2. “Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you are not saved yourself. Be sure of that.” (C H Spurgeon)
- B. Emotions must produce actions
 - 1. Lot was vexed in his soul over the sinful ways of the Sodomites, yet did little about it (2 Peter 2:7-8)
 - 2. Phinehas’ zeal moved him to act against the fornicators (Numbers 25:7-8)
 - 3. Christ was “moved with compassion” and demonstrated it by his actions (Matthew 14:14)

C. Act in spite of obstacles

1. Paul was alone and unsupported in Athens
2. He was not turned aside by distractions
3. Surrounded by false beliefs
 - a. Epicureans, Stoics
 - b. There was well over 25,000 public statues and idols to their many gods

D. See the *soul*, not just the *sin*

III. PROCLAIMING THE SAVIOUR (18,22-34)

A. The preaching of the Gospel (18,22)

1. In Athens, Paul “*preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.*” (Acts 17:18)
2. His sermon from Mars Hill (vv.22-31) was not a Gospel presentation, but an apology (defence) of the Christian faith, as well as his refutation of Greek philosophy
 - a. It is a mistake to (as many do) use this sermon as a template on how to present the gospel, quoting pagan works instead of the Bible, and not using the name of Jesus Christ
 - b. It *is* however a helpful guide in how we should defend our faith against sceptics (1 Peter 3:15; Philippians 1:17)
3. God’s method for getting the Gospel to lost sinners is preaching (Romans 10:8-17; 1 Corinthians 1:21)
4. “When the devil gets influence in a church, up go candles and down goes preaching.” (Hugh Latimer)

B. The particulars of the message (22-31)

1. Declared God as Creator (22-26)
2. Declared God as close (27-29; Psalms 139:7-12; 34:18; Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 1:23)
3. Declared God's Commandment (30)
 - a. God formerly winked at the Gentiles' ignorance (Acts 14:16)
 - b. Now all must repent
 - i. This was the message of God's heralds throughout history (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; Acts 2:38)
 - ii. "God will take nine steps toward us, but he will not take the tenth. He will incline us to repent, but he cannot do our repenting for us." (A W Tozer)
4. Declared God's Christ (31)
 - a. Christ will judge all (John 5:22)

C. The response to the preaching (32-34)

1. Some mocked
2. Some believed

CONCLUSION

How do I get a spirit stirred up for the Lord?

1. Fear God more than men (Proverbs 29:25)
2. Love the *people* of this world (John 3:16), but hate the *things* of this world (1 John 2:15-17)
3. Maintain a sensitivity to the Spirit's prompting