



"The Disrupting Effect of the Gospel-Pt. 2"

In Acts 17, there are 3 examples of the disrupting effect of the gospel which should create proper expectations in our ministry to the lost:

Example #1: Gospel Ministry Amidst Jealousy—vv.1-9

Example #2: Gospel Ministry Amidst Agitation—vv.10-15

Example #3: Gospel Ministry Amidst Ridicule—vv.16-34

i. The gospel will provoke those committed to intellectual pride—vv.16-21

ii. The gospel will incite those condemned by culpable ignorance—vv.22-34

(1 Kings 8:27)

All idolatry tries to minimize the gulf between the Creator and his creatures, in order to bring him under our control. More than that, it actually reverses the respective positions of God and us, so that, instead of our humbly acknowledging that God has created and rules us, we presume to imagine that we can create and rule God. There is no logic in idolatry; it is a perverse, topsy-turvy expression of our human rebellion against God. (1)

The buildings and monuments of Athens were unrivalled. The Acropolis...was elevated enough to be seen from miles around, has been described as 'one vast composition of architecture and sculpture dedicated to the national glory and to the worship of the gods'...Paul could have lingered in the agora, with its many porticoes painted by famous artists, in order to listen to the debates of its contemporary statesmen and philosophers, for Athens was well known for its democracy [and prestigious philosophical background being home base for the likes of Plato and Socrates] ...[One historian] referred to Athens as 'one great altar, one great sacrifice'...another said that it was easier to find a god there than a man'. There were innumerable temples, shrines, statues and altars. In the Parthenon stood a huge gold and ivory statue of Athena, 'whose gleaming spear-point was visible forty miles away'. Elsewhere there were [many other beautiful] images...all the gods of Olympus...They were made not only of stone and brass, but of gold, silver, ivory and marble, and they had been elegantly fashioned by the finest Greek sculptors. (2)

The Epicureans... considered the gods to be so remote as to take no interest in and have no influence on human affairs. The world was due to chance, a random concourse of atoms, and there would be no survival of death, and no judgment. So human beings should pursue pleasure, especially the serene enjoyment of a life detached from pain, passion and fear.

The Stoics...acknowledged the supreme god but in a pantheistic way, confusing him with the 'world soul'. The world was determined by fate, and human beings must pursue their duty, resigning themselves to live in harmony with nature and reason, however painful this might be, and develop their own self-sufficiency.

To oversimplify, it was characteristic of Epicureans to emphasize chance, escape and the enjoyment of pleasure, and of the Stoics to emphasize fatalism, submission and the endurance of pain. (3)

1 John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Acts* (The Bible Speaks Today; Accordance electronic ed. Downers Grove.: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 287.

2 Stott, 277.

2 Stott, 280-281.