

The Pastor's Message

Rev. H. E. Mullen*

Text: Acts 17:16

"Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry."

In discussing this text there are three things I would like briefly to set before you.

1. What the Apostle saw. 2. How he felt, and 3, What he did.

First, he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. This does not mean that people spent all their time at the foot of an idol, but it does suggest that everything else was subservient to the one great thing in their lives, the worship of idols. Idols met his gaze at every turn, big idols, little idols, new idols and old idols. There were more idols in Athens alone at that time, than in all the rest of Greece put together. One writer said there were nearly as many idols as there were men. The apostle saw more than just idols. He perceived a cause for all this. They prided themselves as being great scholars and philosophers. Therefore he saw that education alone could not meet man's need, and unless God could smile upon it, it was of little value. He saw that man could not know anything that would not do his soul good without divine revelation.

(I am convinced there is great need of a Holiness school in this Eastern section, so our young people can have the benefit of such a school where God is honored.)

Paul saw the truth of the statement, "That man by wisdom knew not God."

Secondly, let us notice how Paul felt at Athens. I believe he felt stirred with holy compassion. It moved him to see souls clinging to that which could offer only disappointment and heartache. God give us a revival of compassion when we see girls of only twelve to fifteen years of age sitting around country stores smoking. One must be heartless indeed that would not be stirred with compassion at the things we see in this age.

He doubtless was moved with sorrow as he saw how blinded their eyes had become. In spite of all that men may say to the contrary, the child of God will find himself groaning in his spirit as sorrow fills the heart with compassion for the lost. He certainly must have been stirred with holy indignation against the sin of his time.

It seems one may have compassion and sorrow for men that are held by sin's power, but unless we have a holy indignation that sends us out to cry out against the sins that are damning our generation, we are sadly lacking in our ministry. Then, coupled with the above mentioned feelings, he must have stirred with holy zeal that sent him forth to counteract the evils of that wicked city.

In conclusion let us notice what he did at Athens. We might approach this thought by suggesting some things he did not do. He did not confer with flesh and blood. If he had they probably would have told him he was making a lot of unnecessary trouble for himself, and since he was only here waiting for Silas and Timotheus, the way people acted and how they worshipped was none of his affairs. He did not excuse himself because he was alone, that would have been the way of the flesh.

He did not excuse himself because he was

a Jew. How easy it is to listen to Satan's suggestions when we feel we are unpopular.

But this is what he did. He began to look for an opportunity to be useful so in the Synagogue and in the market place he preached Jesus and the Resurrection. No doubt had Paul used tact and wisdom that worldly men speak of, he could have preached about Christ and evaded saying anything about the Resurrection, then he would have been looked upon as a good fellow, or as we hear over the radio, "a good scout." It is the same today, you can preach a social gospel and not meet with much opposition, but as sure as the Resurrection of Christ from the dead was the phase of truth most hated in the Apostle's time, so the teaching of Heart Holiness is today. You may even preach about Holiness, even say one will never be at their best without this blessing, but when one declares that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," then the battle begins. May we, like the Apostle Paul, see things as they are, and feel stirred in our spirit until we act in a way that will bring honor and glory to our Lord.

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TEMPERED TRUTHS

Rev. F. A. Dunlop

The Psalmist said, "I will run the way of Thy Commandments. when Thou shalt enlarge my heart." Here is an accomplishment indeed. Where is the Christian who would not delight in such a prospect? Conquering the Commandments of God! Men have mastered some difficult ways. Our weeklies have carried of late, pictures of the Burma Road. And of the more recent engineering feat—the Alaskan Highway. The highest peaks of earth have been marked with the foot-prints of man, and next in order is a visit to one of our neighboring planets. I wouldn't say it couldn't be done, for if I did, some one would go and do it. The Psalmist, however, had a loftier goal, and may I add, a more difficult one. His was the task of "running the way of God's commandments." To say that thousands have tried and failed, would be no exaggeration. Yet he speaks with certainty of the possibility. A possibility based upon an experience referred to as an "enlargement of heart."

Judging from what the Psalmist expected of the experience, I would say he has in mind, the "Second Blessing." Let us consider the text with this thought in mind.

First, the experience was to correct the propensities of his heart. "I will run." This suggests naturalness or proclivity. He would travel that way with the whole assent of his being. "When Thou shalt enlarge my heart." Here the Psalmist exposes the real enemy to success, namely, a heart inclined to wander. Wasn't it a Christian who wrote that song: "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it; prone to leave the God I love?" Too bad the man could not have found David's cure. The Second Blessing corrects this maladjustment. Paul says, "And now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness." Fruit is a natural consequence. You do not grow "figs of thistles." The Second Blessing puts the heart in line with the commandments. "I will" is better than "I will not."

Secondly, the text suggests progress. "I will RUN." The Second Blessing is God's cure for stagnation. Most Christians find it diffi-

cult to keep going. Could we retain a fair percentage of our converts, strong churches would spring up everywhere. I fear for the safety of any of our converts when they manifest no interest in the "double cure." Wesley sang, "Then shall my feet no longer rove, rooted and fixed in God." One must be able to stand, before they can expect to run. So many Christians make no progress because they haven't even learned to stand. Paul speaks of "THIS grace, wherein we STAND." Progress is possible after an "enlargement" of heart.

Thirdly, the text suggests the Second Blessing because it speaks of the heart being enlarged. The Blessing has to do very definitely with the heart. In Regeneration the sin of the heart is subjugated and conquered. In Sanctification, the sin of the heart is expurgated and the temple cleansed. This is in keeping with the mind of the Psalmist—the prospect of an enlarged heart. The most sensible method for making room in some places would be a house-cleaning. Some rooms could be enlarged greatly by clearing out the rubbish. I never visit a "second hand store" without being caused to wonder. There is no room in the heart of the believer for sin. Sin is the great ally of Satan. Sin is the great hindrance to spiritual progress. Sin encumbers the soul with no end of harmful, hurtful evils. A thorough cleaning is in order, when sin infests the soul. Such a cleaning as John preached in the words: "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Such a cleansing makes for room. Room for the Holy Spirit's abiding; room for the fruits of the Spirit; room for "the way of God's Commandments," "when Thou shalt enlarge my heart."

And finally, the text is a Second Blessing text because the heart cure is to be a work of God. "When THOU shalt enlarge my heart." Neither growth, death, nor Purgatory is the agent. God, and God only, can provide the sin cure. Here is the ground of the Psalmist's hope. And since God is the Agent of our cleansing there is hope for all. Sin cannot prevail when the heart is opened to the fires of Pentecost. May the faith of the Psalmist burn in every unsanctified breast, and may that faith lead on to full realization of the DOUBLE CURE.

HOPE

In Spiritual as in earthly things there is a great strength in hope, and, therefore, God's people are careful to cultivate that grace: A well-grounded hope that, having been made new creatures in Jesus Christ, we are His; that with our names, though unknown to fame, written in the Book of Life, we have grace in possession and heaven in prospect; that after a few more brief years, pure as the angels that sing before the throne, we shall be brought with gladness into the palace of the King, to be like Christ and with Christ, seeing Him eye to eye and face to face—such hopes are powerful springs of action—Guthrie.

Too much noise deafens us; too much light blinds us; too great a distance or too much of proximity equally prevents us from being able to see; too long and too short a distance obscures our knowledge of a subject; too much of a truth stuns us.—Pascal.