

Being Troubled for the Right Reasons

Scripture Reading — Acts 17

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. — Acts 17:16

Paul followed a general pattern as he traveled. Upon entering a city, he would go first to the local Jewish synagogue. At some point, he would explain from the Scriptures about Jesus, the Messiah. Some Jews and Godfearing Gentiles would come to faith, but others would oppose Paul and stir up crowds against him as he taught in the marketplace.

To quiet the mobs and stay safe, Paul often had to leave, and the pattern would repeat when he went to another town. In Acts 17 we see a change in the pattern, though. Paul went to Athens while Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea a little longer.

In Athens, Paul went to the synagogue and then to the marketplace, and some philosophers brought him to the Areopagus, where ideas were debated. Paul took this opportunity to draw people's attention to the "unknown God" that was mentioned on an altar nearby. Paul was "greatly distressed" at seeing so many idols in Athens, and he wanted to tell everyone about the true God whom they all needed to know.

When was the last time your heart was troubled in this way? We live in a world of idols today too. The idols of social networks, technology, individualism, materialism, greed, money, power, and so much more are all around us. We can follow Paul's pattern of engagement, but we also need a distressed heart—in tune with God's love for the world.

Prayer

Dear God, may our hearts long for everyone to know you as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Amen.

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