

Gods Provocation 09-06-20

Why does God permit circumstances to occur that result in people walking away from God, faith and the church family? If God knows the future and desires all men be saved, why let these things happen? We cannot always know why God acts, but there are Scriptural examples that reveal God's actions in providence in our lives. One of those actions is the provocation of God.

In Deuteronomy 32:19-22 Moses warned Israel that Israel would provoke God with false gods. If they did so, they could expect that God would provoke Israel, either to jealousy or action. Moses went on to point to the various provocations Israel gave God. Israelites provoked God in Deuteronomy 9:7 with rebellion; in Deuteronomy 9:18 with idolatry; and in Deuteronomy 9:22 by their complaining. Christians can provoke God. Paul said this to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 10:22; their divided attention. The church in Laodicea provoked God in Revelation 3:15-19 by being lukewarm.

Just as we can still provoke God, God still acts to provoke us. Consider these two examples in the Old Testament. In 1 Samuel 2:25 the sons of Eli were sinning in the temple, and God sought to destroy them. He was provoking them to die, and the response was to sin more. In 2 Chronicles 33:10-12 Manasseh refused to obey God, and God provoked him to repentance. Each of these instances produced different results (death vs. repentance), but both were the result of the provocation of God.

Why would God permit something to happen that drives others away from him? The answer is that God provokes to action from inaction. God desires action. He would prefer rejection to sitting on the fence. Consider the message of Elijah: *Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word.* 1 Kings 18:21

What does a fence sitter look like? Today, it is a Christian who is present at some or most services, but their weakness is that they are not averse to missing some too. They have mostly Godly conduct in the home, but they are also letting some worldliness get by. Fundamentally, they are content with their achievements in Christ, and see no need for improvement.

Is this you? Are you a fence sitter? Then you need to consider that God finds this unacceptable. You have two expectations. God is going to provoke you (because He loves you!). Secondly, that provocation will result in either a closer walk with God in faith, or being separated from Him. Why wait for His provocation? Choose to resist being a fence-sitter