

The Wisdom And Foolishness Of Watching And Waiting.

Acts 5:34-40.

Sunday morning, November 15, 2009.

I. The wisdom of watching and waiting.

A. The Sanhedrin was “cut to the quick;” they were furious with the apostles over the bold reply they gave to the accusations the Sanhedrin did charge them with.

1. The guilt for the bloodshed of the Lord Jesus Christ they laid justly at the doorstep of the Sanhedrin.
2. They confronted the Sanhedrin with the truth that God had vindicated Jesus from His shameful humiliation and death by raising Him from the dead.
3. They confronted the Sanhedrin with the further truth that God had exalted Jesus by setting Him at His right hand as Prince (Chief Leader), and Savior.
4. That God had done so for the purpose of granting repentance and forgiveness

of

sins to those that would humbly obey Him.

5. And that the followers of Jesus together with the Holy Spirit were the witnesses of these facts.

B. It was wise to watch and wait under these circumstances because in the heat of conflict you do not make your best and brightest decisions.

1. Gamaliel seems to have been a level-headed man; a fair minded man, at least in a worldly sense. One who had a contemplative character rather than a reactionary character.
 - Because of this he was well respected by all the people.
 - Because of this he is able to keep his cool and think clearly under these circumstances, and to give good advise, at least in a worldly sense of the word.

2. It was wise to watch and to wait because of the immense popularity the apostles and the Christian movement enjoyed with the masses of the people.
 - Acts 2:47 says that they had favor with all the people.
 - Acts 5:13 says that the people esteemed them highly.
 - Acts 5:26 records that the temple guards brought the apostles very carefully before the council, for they feared the people lest they should be stoned.
 - Not to mention the healing of the man over 40 yrs. old who had been lame since he was born, and the countless others who had been healed from diseases and had demons cast out.

There was a great risk of a severe backlash on the part of the people toward the Sanhedrin if they, in the heat of the moment, moved to kill the apostles. They might even be stoned by them.

3. It was wise to wait and watch from a historical point of view. There had been many messianic imposters in the years leading up to the coming of Christ, and during His earthly ministry, and there would be several more before the judgment of 70AD would come. Josephus mentions some of them by name, such as Judas of Galilee mentioned here. The Lord Jesus had warned his disciples about them in Matthew 24:5.

All these movements had come to nothing and both the leaders and their

followers had perished at the hands of the Romans. These apostles and their followers would fare no better, so reasons Gamaliel.

4. It was wise to watch and wait if per chance the Lord was in the movement, then they could not overthrow it, and would even be fighting against the Lord.

II. The foolishness of watching and waiting.

A. In terms of the Sanhedrin's right standing before the Lord there was no way that a watching and waiting attitude could bring them into such a right standing.

1. There was no way that such a disposition could bring them into the possession of the graces of repentance and faith, offered to them by the exalted Prince and Savior Jesus Christ.
2. At a minimum what the situation called for was:
 - Earnest prayer to God for guidance and direction regarding the truth;
 - a willingness to re-trace their steps to see if they had miss-carried justice with the Lord Jesus Christ;
 - a willingness to humbly engage in self-examination as to their own motives;
 - a willingness not to see themselves as infallible and above the law, and to leave open the possibility that they had been wrong.

Certainly to them, and to us, applies the promise of the Lord Jesus in John 7:17 "If anyone will to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority."

3. The foolishness of Gamaliel's counsel was that it "rescued" the Sanhedrin from all this hard and humbling work.

B. In terms of the Sanhedrin's calling to watch over the spiritual well being of the nation as the supreme religious court of the land, there was no way that a watch and wait attitude would do justice to their calling.

1. Multitudes were being caught up in the Christian movement, for better or for worse, and these leaders were not going to give any guidance on the matter?
2. That notable works were going on in and around Jerusalem was clear to all, and they were going to keep silent as to the nature of those works? They, the very ones on which humanly speaking all depended for direction?
3. The foolishness of Gamaliel's counsel is that it leads the Sanhedrin into a path of utter delinquency of duty, and thereby making themselves liable to the judgment of God. Their trumpet was not even going to make an uncertain sound; it was going to make no sound at all! 1 Cor. 14:8.

Application:

The Christian faith will not leave you comfortably sitting on the fence.

It demands action from you:

1. In embracing its message of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. In engaging in honest self examination in terms of your own righteousness or sinfulness, and the motives of your heart.
3. In engaging in an honest search of the truthfulness of the Christian message and the nature of the Person of Christ .
4. If you settle any of life's questions, this one has to come first.