

## Introduction:

The Bible speaks of heeding wise counsel. **Proverbs 1:5** *"A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel"*, **Proverbs 19:21** *"There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the LORD'S counsel-that will stand."* Wise means intelligent; Counsel is instruction, learning, doctrine. We need to be careful of who we listen to because there is also foolish counsel, **Proverbs 21:30** *"There is no wisdom or understanding Or counsel against the LORD."*

### I) The Need To Decide vs. Indecision

#### A) Why do people not make decisions?

1. The matter does not matter to them. It is deemed insignificant. (Which parking place, what to eat, what to wear, etc)
2. We don't know what the right decision is. There are times we simply do not know. In this case we need to do our homework.
3. We are afraid to making a commitment. Can't decide what school to go to, to purchase a car or house, etc.
4. We know what to do but don't like the right choice.

#### B) In some cases, we can get by not making a choice.

1. Let somebody else make it for us. Getting someone else to decide where we eat.

2. Procrastinate, wait until tomorrow. Therefore, we are deciding by not deciding.

**C) In some cases, we are the only ones that can make the decision.**

1. Whether to obey the Gospel or not, is personal, and your decision.
2. Whether to live as a Christian is also your decision.

**II) Background To Our Text**

**A) Earlier events in *Acts 5*.**

1. Ananias and Sapphira were killed by lying to God, **vv. 1-11**.
2. The Apostles were working miracles on Solomon's porch, **v. 12**
3. People from other cities were bringing the sick and demon possessed to Jerusalem to the Apostles, **v. 16**.
4. The Apostles were arrested, imprisoned but released by angel of the Lord, **vv. 17-19**.
5. The Apostles go back to the temple and start preaching again, **v. 20ff**.
6. Once again they are arrested and this time they are brought before the High Priest, **v. 27**.
7. They were told not to preach any more concerning Jesus but they were determined to obey God rather than men, **vv. 29ff**.

**B) They then put the apostles outside.**

1. Why? So they could hide what was about to be said, **vv. 33-34**.
2. People will try to hide what they are ashamed of, **1 Thessalonians 5:5-7 NKJV** **5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.**
3. Contrast this with the openness of the Apostle's preaching in the market places or Jesus' teaching openly to the people.

**C) Who was Gamaliel?**

**Acts 5:34** *"Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while."*

1. A well respected and established Rabbi, a Pharisee, and one of his pupils was Saul of Tarsus (**Acts 22.3**).
2. His grandfather was Hillel, who took a rather lenient view of the scriptures, in contrast to the Rabbi Shammai.
3. A member of the Sanhedrin and one who had not spoken up on earlier occasions.
4. One who had great influence on the counsel.

**III) Gamaliel's Wise Counsel**

**A) Be careful,**

**Acts 5:35** *And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men.*

1. This was serious matter. If we were to list serious matters, we could say piloting an airplane, performing open heart surgery, driving a car, etc.
2. The Gospel is serious because it affects our soul.
3. There are two possibilities with the Gospel.
  - a. It is true – if so, **John 12.48**. If it is true and we obey it then we will be saved. If it is true and we reject it then we will be lost.
  - b. It is false – we believe a lie—deceived, misled, and lost.
4. So how do we know? By the evidence presented!

**B) A Look at the evidence**

1. Gamaliel recounted the destruction of earlier false teachers.

**Acts 5:36** *"For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. 37 "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed.*
2. The truth will win out. False prophets will be exposed while true prophets will be right all the time.
3. Although not specifically mentioned in this passage we have

the prophecies and their fulfillment.

4. Look at those in our life time that claimed to of been sent by God.; Jehovah Witnesses False Prophets, Jim Jones, etc.

**Acts 5:38** *"And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing;*

5. False doctrine and false teachers will eventually be exposed.

- a. This should not be confused with don't expose false doctrine or never tell someone they are wrong.

**Jude 1:3** *Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*

- b. But in this case, they had these men performing miracles and teaching about Jesus. If this was blasphemy it would eventually be evident .

**C) God will be victorious,**

**Acts 5:39** *"but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it--lest you even be found to fight against God."*

1. The over all theme in Revelation is God will be victorious.
2. God never fails in accomplishing His purpose,

**Romans 16:20a** *"And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly."*

#### IV) What Was Unwise

##### A) They did not look at the evidence

1. Miracles could not be denied. The resurrection was not denied, the death of Ananias and Sapphira was well known, the healing of the sick and casting out of demons were all seen by the people.
2. But these events were ignored.

##### B) His advice was the be neutral,

***Acts 5:38 "And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing;***

1. To decide to not decide is to decide for evil.

***1 Kings 18:21 And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word.***

2. The same goes for us today. To be indifferent or non-committal is to side with Satan.
3. Why do some decide to not decide today?
  - a. The love the praise of men more than the praise of God, ***Matthew 10:32 "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. 33 "But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.***

- b. Because of family members, **Matthew 10:37** "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. **38** "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. **39** "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.
- c. Because they are cowards, **Revelation 21:8** "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."
- d. Because they love the passing pleasure of sin, **Hebrews 3:13** "but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." **Hebrews 11:25**
- e. Because they do not love the truth, **John 3:19** "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. **20** "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. **21** "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."
- f. Because of monetary reasons (the cost), **Acts 19:24** "For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small

*profit to the craftsmen. 25 He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. 26 "Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. 27 "So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship."*

- g. Because they don't look beyond today, **Hebrews 9:27**  
*"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment"*

### **Conclusion:**

Gamaliel's counsel had an element of truth to it but it was wrong. One can not take a neutral stand with God. Either you are a servant of God or of Satan.