

What is the Danger of Ignoring Godly Counsel?

Acts 27:1-12

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Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, saying, "Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. And because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter in, the majority decided to put out to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing both southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there. - Acts 27:9-12, ESV

We live in a culture that worships the "expert" and the specialist. I can't even remember all the times I've seen people neglect wise, godly counsel in order to comply with the advice of "experts." I've seen it in every area of life: Wise, godly, Biblical advice on dating, marriage, college selection, ethics, politics, career choices, financial planning, parenting, etc. are discarded in exchange for the latest theories from the experts featured on cable news, magazine covers or prominent web sites.

In today's passage, we have some heavy foreshadowing of impending disaster for Paul's trip across the Mediterranean Sea to Rome. Paul has been in Roman custody since he was arrested two years earlier in Jerusalem. Paul's reputation as a faithful man of God earned him the respect of his military guards. However, even though they respected his character, they were unwilling to take his advice on sailing. Clearly, Paul was no expert on seamanship. Still, he had wise counsel and level-headed concerns, which were ignored.

One thing we might miss in this passage and in life is that many experts have ulterior motives. In this case, the centurion who took custody of Paul listened to the advice of the pilot and the owner of the ship. Both of these men has a strong financial interest in taking the risk and sailing, as they would be losing money every week the ship sat in harbor. Today, many experts are paid to advocate a certain position, while others are seriously biased by their worldview against God and the Bible.

When we choose to turn our backs on wise and godly counsel, and instead listen to the expert voices of unbelievers, we are taking a real risk. Our decisions may lead us into danger or cause us to be unfaithful to Christ. How many Christian parents send their children off to secular colleges hostile to Christ, paying large tuition payments just to have their son or daughter indoctrinated in anti-Christian thinking? How many Christian men and women have dated and then married unbelievers, because they believed they were "compatible" or "in love"? The regret comes quickly in some cases and more slowly in others, but it almost always comes.

Why would we turn away from the voices God has given us to the voices that oppose Him? Often we do so out of fear, thinking that we're being left out or left behind. At other times, we think things look better than they really are, because the world does a great job marketing its allurements. We need the faith to turn to the Lord and seek His wisdom, often extended through His people.

Heavenly Father, the world is always calling to us, offering us advice that looks like wisdom and enticements that look like treasure. We need You to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Keep us from following ungodly and deceptive advice that would lead us astray from Your truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.