



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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Acts 5:38-39 "So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overcome them; or else you may even be found fighting against God."

Gamaliel was a well known and respected Jewish rabbi. His influence was huge and many sent their sons to be trained by him. The apostle Paul was one who had been taught by Gamaliel. Our verse today reflects some of his wisdom and advise. Peter and John had been in and out of trouble with the Jewish hierarchy in Jerusalem. They had been arrested for preaching that Jesus was the Christ. They were arrested and then released with a stern warning to hush up about those things and not to preach any more. Immediately, they preached. They were arrested again. Peter responded that we must obey God rather than man. The situation was getting out of hand and Peter was stubborn. Actually, Peter had conviction and was standing upon those. The Pharisees were resolved to put an end to this. Their conclusion was to kill Peter. It seems that taking life didn't bother the Jews.

Gamaliel thought otherwise. His words, our verse today, offers a kind resolution to this heated situation. Let them alone. Play it out. Watch. If they are not from God, this will fade out. He gave other examples of uprisings that quickly withered away. This is how he sees this "Jesus movement." Give it time, it will get old, and it will go away. On the other hand, if they are from God, there is no stopping them. With God on their side, they will succeed. Gamaliel gives a hint that Peter and John might possibly be right.

On paper, what Gamaliel said makes sense. In reality, it's not true. His theory is that false ideas will not last. They will be overthrown. Possibly, intending to imply that God would be the one that puts an end to that which is false. The problem with Gamaliel's theory is that it isn't true. There have been false religions around for a long, long time. Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism are three well known systems that worship a different god, have a different concept of Jesus and reject the New Testament. Those religions have existed for hundreds of years and they have

huge followings. Putting Gamaliel's ideas to the test, one could conclude that they must be from God because they have not been overthrown and it certainly doesn't look like they will be overthrown any time in the near future. Are they from God? No. Are they acceptable? No. Are they part of the Biblical teachings? No.

The spirit of Gamaliel is alive today. It's found in the theme of tolerance. It's often expressed as, "I don't agree with what he believes, but I don't want to judge." Or, "I wouldn't do that, but I'm not one to say that he is wrong." Let it alone. That was Gamaliel's words. Leave Peter and John and their teaching alone. If it is not from God, it will go away. If it is from God, you cannot stop it.

Tolerance seems to be the way to go for most folks today. They certainly do not want to point fingers and tell anyone that what they are doing isn't the Bible way. Just let it alone. Let them alone.

Now, there is some problems with the "letting them alone" thinking.

First, false things do not go away. Sorry, Mr. Gamaliel, you're wrong. False things tend to hang around. Ignorance isn't bliss. Ignorance is blind. The Bible way is to teach. Teach folks what the Bible does say. Teach so that they will know. Truth drives out error. Truth defeats error.

Second, allowing false ideas to exist, only gets more people confused and in a mess. Stepping back and just watching what will happen doesn't help people. The more false things they believe, the deeper in trouble they get and the farther from God they go. Some die, many die, in error. They die, hoping for things that will never be. They die convinced that they are right, when they are not right.

Third, falsehoods seem to get worse with each generation. One generation sticks it's big toe into error. The generation that follows, jumps right in. Consider the example of atheistic evolution. A few generations back it was being tested and considered. Theories were being put out concerning it. Not everyone in the scientific community was buying into it. There were many in Darwin's time that couldn't see his conclusions. But now, a few generations later, the thought on the street is that evolution has been proven. It hasn't. It's no more closer than it was generations ago. In fact, there are more problems and questions than before. But with each generation, error sinks a population deeper and deeper.

Leave them alone? Not good advice. We don't practice that at home. When the kids believe something that is not true, we straighten them out. When they hear things from their friends, parents don't take the approach, let's just ride this out and see where it goes. Your sixteen year old daughter comes home from school and says that she wants to move in with her boy friend. He's convinced her that marriage is just a piece of paper and that love is all that matters. As a parent do you say, "leave them alone. If this is not from God it will be overthrown. But if it is from God, there is no stopping it." Is that the approach? NO. You have a little talk with the daughter and you have a REAL serious talk with Mr. boy friend. Tolerance is not peace. Tolerance is actually cowardice. Tolerance is closing your eyes and not getting involved. Tolerance assumes wrong and crooked views are just as good as right views. Tolerance believes everyone is right and no one is wrong. Tolerance is doing nothing. Because of tolerance, error fills the world. Because of tolerance the voice of God is silent today. Can't

offend those who disagree. Can't offend those who differ. Can't offend those who may get upset. So society silences God. His name is removed. His presence is stilled. Those in error are given a platform.

This was never the pattern of God. When Elijah confronted the false prophets of Baal, the messengers of error, he didn't allow them to stick around and do their own work. He gave them a platform to prove themselves. When they failed, they were removed. When Paul witnessed all the false idols in Ephesus, he didn't take the tolerance path. He didn't say, "Let them alone." He preached the one true God of the Bible.

The solution to error is not tolerance, it is teaching. Letting alone, doesn't solve anything. It's really not even being nice. Nice is to help someone see what is right. Nice is helping them out of the darkness of wrong and error. Nice is making a difference. Tolerance is based upon the concept that there is no absolute right answer. Everyone is right and no one is wrong. A person doesn't get that after reading the Bible. God's way is the only way. God is right. Always.

Those who want to drink the Kool-aid of error and dance to the moon to their delight will surround themselves with those who applaud them and are proud of them. They are deceived and confused. Error seems so right in the darkness of confusion. The light of truth exposes error. Truth never has anything to fear.

Help others see what is right, by standing for what is right and teaching what is right. That is the hope of God. That is our duty and our calling.

Roger Shouse