

“Man’s Advice versus God’s Voice!”

1. **Intro:**

- 1.1. **Communion:** “**Follow me**” speaks to our **conduct**; “**Abide in me**” speaks to our **communion** with Him!
 - 1.1.1. Abide = “*Dependence on, rely upon, wait for, draw strength from.*”
 - 1.1.2. We can learn from “Jesus” secret to an abiding life”!
 - 1.1.2.1. He had **constant contact w/God the Father.**
 - 1.1.2.2. And, He **often withdrew to be alone.**
 - 1.1.3. To keep in constant contact w/Him – we must **deliberately** take steps to do that.
 - 1.1.4. Spurgeon said, “Be not content with an **interview** now and then, **but seek always to retain his company.**”
 - 1.1.5. **Whose we are comes before Whom we serve!** (Union & Communion w/Him)
- 1.2. **Intro:** “**Lord, what do I do? How do I make this decision?**”
 - 1.2.1. We’ve all prayed this prayer!
 - 1.2.1.1. **Whether life-changing decisions; whether to accept an out-of-town job; where to school your children; whom to marry.**
 - 1.2.2. We’ve all wished it was as **clear** as OT times when God **audibly** instructed his people.
 - 1.2.2.1. That job you desire so much, you just wish God would say, “**March around that building once every day for 7 days. On the 7th day march 7 times around it. Then the boss’s defenses will crumble & you will get the job.**”
 - 1.2.3. **But often we seek some audible voice, since God won’t give His. So we seek it from human sources. Which often times just complicates things even worse.**
- 1.3. David Russell said, The hardest thing to learn in life is which bridge to **cross** & which to **burn.**
- 1.4. There are many sources that can lead us **astray:**
 - 1.4.1. [1] **Advice from our own Consciences** – Jiminy Cricket said, “Let your conscience be your guide”, but our conscience isn’t always trustworthy.
 - 1.4.1.1. **Example:** God commanding Moses(burning bush scene) to deliver the Israelites from Egypt. **What did Moses’ conscience say 1st? Ex3:11** (It reminded him of his failure 40 yrs earlier when he killed the Egyptian taskmaster) Guilt crippled his confidence & he replied, “**Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh?**”

- 1.4.2. [2] Advice from **other people** – On **one hand** Proverbs 11:14 says, *Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.* But on the **other hand**, people can be deceived & their wisdom defective.
- 1.4.2.1. **Example:** Nehemiah was told to rebuild the wall in Jerusalem. But certain so-called counselors protested, “**What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?**” (Neh.2:19)
- 1.4.2.2. Sometimes counsel may sound **convincing**, but it can still be **wrong**.
- 1.4.3. [3] Advice from **tradition or logic** – Jonah’s **tradition** taught him, “**Jews don’t associate with pagans like the Ninevites.**” **Logic** said, “**It’s impossible for this many people to repent before God destroys them.**” But God had told him directly, “**Arise, go to Ninevah**”. Tragically he sided with **tradition & logic** which resulted in *a whale of a problem* for poor Jonah.
- 1.5. Listening to advice can lead to **trouble**. **However**, sometimes God **does** speak to us through **our conscience**, the **advice of others**, & common sense borne out of **tradition & logic**.
- 1.5.1. So how do we know **when to follow** these sources of advice & **when not to?**
- 1.5.2. That’s what Paul faces in our chapter today!

2. **MAN’S ADVICE VERSUS GOD’S VOICE! (1-40)**

- 2.1. **PAUL THE TRAVELER!** (1-14)
- 2.2. Luke devotes **5 ½ chapters** to an account of Paul’s last visit to **Jerusalem**.
- 2.2.1. **5 Incidents:** Paul speaks to **a hostile Jewish crowd** in Jerusalem (who he is & why he went to the Gentiles); Paul meets the **Jewish Sanhedrin**; he speaks to **Felix**, then **Festus**, then **King Agrippa**.
- 2.3. In his letter to the **Romans 15:24-32** it was really his heart for them to be his sending base to **Spain**.
- 2.4. **PAUL THE PEACEMAKER!** (15-25)
- 2.5. (23) Paul went from “**the will of the Lord be done**”(14) to “**do what we tell you**”.
- 2.5.1. So anxious was Paul to bring unity to the **Jews & Gentiles** in the church that he agreed to the plan.
- 2.5.2. Not every decision we make turns out to bring peace!
- 2.6. **PAUL THE PRISONER!** (26-40)
- 2.7. (27) The plan almost worked, then on the last day, trouble started.
- 2.8. Paul had been so careful not to cause any unrest in the city (24:10-13)
- 2.9. Like a frenzied pack of coyotes surrounding a rabbit, they begin tearing into Paul.

- 2.10. (37-40) **Mistaken identity!**
- 2.10.1. **The Egyptian** mentioned was a **Jew** who proclaimed himself as a **prophet**. He gathered a large following intending to lead them to the Mount of Olives promising that at his command the walls of Jerusalem would collapse. His force was attacked by Felix, but the Egyptian himself escaped. (LKGNT; Josephus Wars II,13, 5)
- 2.10.2. **The assassins** = because each carried a dagger under his garment.
- 2.11. Paul never lost his **head** because his **heart** was fixed on God!
- 2.12. BACK TO PAUL'S DECISION MAKING!**
- 2.13. [1] **Paul 1st had to face his own opinions.**
- 2.13.1. Why was he so convinced that he should go to Jerusalem?
- 2.13.2. 1st he wanted to personally deliver the \$ donated by the churches; 2nd he was "**bound in the spirit**" to go to Jerusalem(20:22) to preach the gospel to the Jews gathered for the Pentecost celebration.
- 2.14. [2] **Paul next had to face the disciples at Tyre (4)**
- 2.14.1. (NASB) *They kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem.* Paul endured a barrage of "Your life's in danger; don't go to Jerusalem!" {They kept telling him "*through the Spirit*"}
- 2.14.2. **So some say Paul shouldn't have gone; but more likely** the Spirit was predicting what would happen, & the disciples were misinterpreting those **predictions** for **prohibitions!!!**
- 2.14.3. John Stott, "**The warning was Divine, while the urging was human!**"
- 2.14.3.1. Sometimes people think they know God's will for our lives.
- 2.15. [3] **Paul next had to face a prophet named Agabus (9-11)**
- 2.15.1. I'll just say about Agabus, he was 100% on in ch.11:28 when he prophesied the **great famine** (History records it happened 10 years later)
- 2.15.2. However here, the **Jews** didn't bind him (21:11) the **Romans** did; & he wasn't delivered into the hands of the Jews but of the Romans.
- 2.15.2.1. Though not directly, the same result was had.
- 2.16. [4] **Paul next had to face Dr. Luke & Others (12)**
- 2.16.1. "**We and those from that place** pleaded with him not to go up to Jer"
- 2.16.2. Here they piled it on thicker & thicker, plenty of advice for Paul!
- 2.17. Not one person said to him, "Hang in there, Paul. You obey God's plan for your life, & I'll stand with you."
- 2.17.1. Paul's response(13) **Why are you weeping and breaking my heart?**
- 2.17.2. **But weren't they just looking after Paul's good, the Church's good, & their own good?**
- 2.17.2.1. Maybe, but they were forgetting about **God's good!**
- 2.17.3. **The will of the Lord be done!** (14)
- 2.17.3.1. Oh did we **contrast** vs.14 & vs.23?

2.18. **Enduring Principles concerning Other's Advice!**

2.19. **1st if you seek advice, be discerning!**

- 2.19.1. Sometimes counselors are essential. Like in **sporting events**, we need the advice of a wiser coach, who can see the action in our lives from an objective vantage point. (Olympics this Fri – Coaches are always mentioned)
- 2.19.2. **You must go to the right sidelines; get advice from those on your team**
- 2.19.2.1. Not advice from Oprah or Eckhart Tolle, Dr.Phil or Dr.Laura S.
- 2.19.2.2. If your advisors come from the world, they are going to give worldly advice.
- 2.19.2.3. Some might be a little helpful, “When in charge, **ponder**; When in trouble, **delegate**; When in doubt, **mumble**.” 😊
- 2.19.3. **Go to the **coach**, not to the water boy** (who's most qualified to help me?);
- 2.19.4. **As for **time-outs** in life, they are unlimited, call one whenever you need one.**¹ (carve out some time on your schedule to pray, meditate on Scripture, & select appropriate counsel)
- 2.19.5. **Also, go while the game is still in progress.** Sometimes in a marriage it might be too late when one finally goes to the sidelines for help/counsel, only to find out the game is already over. Time has run out. (Don't put off making the decision or solving the problem. Deal with it now. Make the phone call, read the book, schedule the apt, take the time-out. Your future may depend on it.)

2.20. **2nd if you give advice, be wise!**

- 2.20.1. Wise counseling always begins with **attentive listening**. Understand it from their perspective. Look at them from God's viewpoint.
- 2.20.2. **Give Word-oriented counsel, it will be instructive.**

2.21. **3rd if you decide against the advice, be careful!**

- 2.21.1. Sometimes you have the “right” to do something, but the Spirit hasn't freed you to do it! - **Though your actions may be confusing to others, you have to follow the Spirit's leading.**
- 2.21.2. Think of **Paul** resisting the powerful influence of his closest companions in order to walk Christ's narrow road!
- 2.21.3. **As you receive advice, carefully weigh the consequences: What will **happen** if I follow this advice? - Will taking the **smooth path** bring as much glory to Christ as taking the **rocky way**? - What does **God's Word** say will happen if we follow that advice? - What is the **Spirit's** inner promptings telling us?**
- 2.22. Answers to these questions aren't always black & white. **Determining God's will can be complicated.** But through the process, let Paul's words of commitment to Christ undergird your thinking, “**I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die...for the name of the Lord Jesus!”** Then whatever the outcome, you'll have peace! 😊
- 2.23. **When you can't trace God's **hand**, trust His **heart!****

¹ J. Grant Howard Jr.; Knowing God's Will & Doing it; pg.65,66.