

Acts 5:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

Analysis

Gamaliel's famous counsel—'Refrain from these men, and let them alone'—expresses confidence that false movements self-destruct. His conditional reasoning ('if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought') proves prophetically true for the church's survival. Though Gamaliel likely remained unconvinced, his prudential advice allowed Christianity to grow under divine protection, demonstrating God's sovereignty over even unbelieving authorities.

Historical Context

The Sanhedrin's receptiveness to Gamaliel's counsel reflects his immense authority. Roman oversight limited the Sanhedrin's ability to execute perceived threats without cause, making prudence politically wise. Gamaliel's moderation contrasts with Sadducean extremism and prefigures his student Paul's eventual conversion.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does 2,000 years of church history vindicate Gamaliel's test for discerning God's work versus human movements?
2. What does God's use of an unconverted Pharisee to protect the early church teach us about divine providence?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	τὰ	νῦν	λέγω	ὑμῖν	ἀπόστητε	ἀπὸ	τῶν	ἀνθρώπων
And	G3588	G3568	I say	unto you	Refrain	from	G3588	men
G2532			G3004	G5213	G868	G575		G444
τούτων	καὶ	ἐάσατε	αὐτούς·	ὅτι	ἐὰν	ἢ	ἐξ	ἀνθρώπων
these	And	alone	them	for	if	be	of	men
G5130	G2532	G1439	G846	G3754	G1437	G5600	G1537	G444
ἢ	βουλὴ	αὕτη	ἢ	τὸ	ἔργον	τοῦτο	καταλυθήσεται	
G3588	counsel	this	G2228	G3588	work	this	it will come to nought	
	G1012	G3778			G2041	G5124		G2647

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 15:13 (Parallel theme): But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

Lamentations 3:37 (Parallel theme): Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?

Proverbs 21:30 (Parallel theme): There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

Isaiah 14:25 (Parallel theme): That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders.

Nehemiah 4:15 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

1 Corinthians 3:19 (Parallel theme): For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

John 11:48 (Parallel theme): If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.

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