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Who shall be your Advisers?

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WHO SHALL BE YOUR ADVISERS?

BY PRESIDENT TUTTLE.

W. Tuttle College

"Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete and to have gained this harm and loss." ACTS xxvii, 21.

The winds and waves are proverbial for instability and power. The discoveries of modern science have not changed this fact, which is as apparent now as in those far-off times when the Apostle Paul accomplished his famous voyages on the "great sea." The waters of the sea still threaten the destruction of the stoutest ships, and so treacherous are they that, smooth as glass now, or only agitated with gentle wavelets, in an hour they may be swept with furious tempests into great waves that shall cause the boldest sailor to cry out in terror.

About the first of October, in the year of our Lord sixty-two, a ship was riding at anchor at a point on the south coast of the island of Crete. As compared with one of our ocean steamers it was a rude affair. It was square at each end, and had in the middle a single mast, with a huge yard-arm, to which the sail might be hung. It was a vessel of considerable size, and on it were several hundred persons, composed of sailors, the ordinary passengers, and a company of Roman soldiers under the command of a Centurion. This Roman officer had several state prisoners in charge whom he was conducting to Rome. The most remarkable of these was the Apostle Paul, who, for some reason, was treated with the most marked respect by all on board, and especially by the Centurion.

The most valuable thing entrusted to this ship's crew was *human life*. Besides this, the vessel was also laden with valuable merchandise on its way to market; so that, in either light, that of precious human life, which has no value in money, or of property whose value can be named in money, it

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was a matter of great moment that no misfortune should befall that ship.

About the beginning of our second fall month the navigation of the Mediterranean for such rude and unwieldy vessels as that just referred to was regarded as hazardous. Even now, at that season, storms are not unusual of such severity as sometimes to put in peril the staunchest steamer. How much more so the vessels which crept along the shores of that famous sea, only striking out boldly from the land when compelled to, eighteen centuries ago. That stormy period of the year had arrived, and there at Fair Havens — not the best of harbors, but still a harbor — was the ship in which Paul was carried a prisoner on his way to Rome. A long voyage was yet to be made, and the question which agitated the master of the ship and the sailor, the Centurion and the private soldier, was the safety of continuing the voyage at that season of the year. It is true that just now the weather is fair and the sea calm, but the time has arrived when storms are to be expected. Is it wise to weigh anchor and shake out the sail on the broad sea, or shall we remain where we are in this harbor? It is evident that these people on that ship asked such questions. We may, without any strain of imagination, suppose that the Centurion, with whom the final decision of the question rested, put to the experienced ship-master and his sailors, and perhaps to intelligent people resident upon the island, such questions as these: Does the stormy period sometimes delay until the middle or last of October, or is there such uniformity in its times that you feel quite sure it will be here very shortly? Are these storms always violent and dangerous, or are they sometimes light and harmless? From all that you know is it, in your opinion, safe to leave this harbor now?

The narration implies that it was the opinion of all on board that it would not be very *pleasant* to remain in that harbor several months, and that it would involve considerable additional cost. The thought of wintering there was not agreeable to sailor, soldier or prisoner. The Centurion, as already stated, was to decide the question of remaining or risking a continuance of the voyage, and he, like a wise man, asked

the advice of those who were supposed to have experience. The ship-master, perhaps biased by the cost of wintering so far from home, and his sailors, biased by the desire either to reach more attractive quarters, or perhaps their home, advised to venture the voyage. The sailors agreed in this advice, as is evident at their satisfaction, after leaving port, in finding, as they supposed, their judgment confirmed by the favoring weather and wind.

One man on that ship, and he a prisoner, gave advice which was the precise opposite of that followed. He was not a sailor, but he was a man of close observation and clear judgment. It is unnecessary to consider his advice in this instance as the result of any miraculous inspiration. He was born on the shore of this very sea, and had often accomplished voyages over its treacherous waters. He told the captain and Centurion, as we may well suppose, to "recall the facts which the past furnished as to the danger of navigating these waters, 'because the fast was now already past.' This year it may come a little later than usual, but it will surely come, and when it comes sailing is always dangerous. It is true to-day the waves sleep and the winds are still; it is true it will cost some money to winter in a foreign port, and it will not be very pleasant to remain so long away from your homes; yet past observation makes it certain that you can not now commit yourselves to this sea without putting in great peril the cargo and the lives on this ship. Therefore, sirs, I admonish you that if you venture, your voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives."

The Centurion was evidently in doubt which advice to follow, but finally determined to reject Paul's and adopt the ship-captain's. The result I need not describe.

What is pertinent to my present purpose, and the apology for this extended introduction, is that the men in charge of that ship ventured on that disastrous voyage in view of *advice*, and, as the event proved, of *bad* advice. They declined to follow what the event proved to be *good* advice. They followed the bad advice, and lost both the ship and its cargo and put every life on board in the most serious peril. Ha

they followed the good advice they would have escaped the peril and the shipwreck.

I do not propose to deliver to my young friends and pupils, this night, an elaborate essay or argument. For the first time this "College year" I am conducting the Sabbath evening College service, so precious to us from its past history. Here is a large company of young men, gathered from many widely separated homes. Some of them for the first time meet us here. All profess to have a worthy object in view, and all are encompassed with the perils of temptation.

I have often watched the ships in New York harbor, with their sails reefed, but ready to be shaken out to the wind, and whose engines were holding their Titanic forces ready to shove the great ships out into the ocean for a voyage to another continent, and I always felt some degree of sadness in viewing even so grand a sight, because the gallant ship can not cross the ocean without the peril of collision, or the iceberg, or foundering, or fire. The voyage, begun with booming cannon, and exhilarating strains of music, and merry smiles, and smooth seas, and bright skies, may terminate in some such catastrophe as overtook the Central America, or smote the Arctic, or swallowed up the President in depths so profound that no voice ever came back to tell its fate. To steer the ship a point or two this way or that may involve it in any one of the horrors which have been recorded in the history of those "who go down into the sea in ships and do business great waters." The voyage is begun; *how shall it end?* That is the question which saddens the otherwise inspiring sight.

Not unlike this is the situation of every young man before me. He is just moving out from the wharf on a voyage propitiously begun, the termination of which is known only to God. He is to-day in health; the year may close over his grave.

I confess to the feeling of sadness, in spite of many pleasant facts, as we begin our College year; and this sadness is not mainly in view of the fact that death this year may terminate the earthly career of some one of these young men. To a good man death is not the greatest conceivable calam-

ity. He who is pure in heart ought not to be considered unfortunate when permitted to see God. He who has filled up his life with works of love and goodness ought not to be commiserated as so *very* unfortunate when the Master says to him, "Enter into the joys of thy Lord."

It is not the possible fact of death to any one of our number that makes me sad to-night in looking over this company of young men, but it is this question, as to how you, my young friends, are to endure the moral tests and trials of this year, which tinges this otherwise glad hour with sadness. Young men in times past have come here on whom dishonor had set no seal and left no stain; they came pure from the family home, with the very imprint of affection still on their lips; they came, apparently, with noble aspirations and resolute purposes to cleave to that which is good and to abhor that which is evil; and yet, in some *few* cases, their aspirations after good were drowned in the vortex of passion, and their abhorrence of the bad reversed at the imperious dictate of an evil heart fired by the solicitations of sin. Some here, in times past, have been tempted to do deeds which they can never recall without shame—deeds that have left a blot on the good name which ought to have been more precious than great riches. Some have so far forgotten true manliness as to be false to it by making promises only to break them. Some have committed deeds in darkness that would make them tremble if displayed to the world in the open day. Some have squandered on appetite and the weak vanity of display, and, it may be, on worse objects still, the money earned by the sweat of the father and the toil of the mother, and even the precious wages of the sister, who was wearing out her young life to gain the privileges of education for her brother, that he might become a man. Some have slept, and dozed, and lazed away the hours and opportunities God gave them for improvement. Some—forgive the seeming harshness—some who might have been wise, have, through indolence or vicious indulgence become fools whom no braying in the mortar with wheat by the pestle of discipline could deliver from their folly. Some who might have shone in our firmament with the mild and beautiful radiance of stars have gone down into

ignominious darkness. Some, with less discretion than the bird for whose wary feet the unconcealed net is spread in vain, have stepped rashly and with open eyes into the *uncovered* net of the saloon and the gambling-hell. Aye, some who here might have climbed to the high places of the earth, have plunged headlong into the depths of shame for time, and perhaps into the depths of eternal perdition.

On the other hand, here many a young man has striven against poverty, and misfortune, and temptation; has met the same solicitations to laziness, unthrift and sin that were the occasion of ruin to the other, and he has overcome them all, rising from the hard-won victory into a manhood that commanded the respect of all beholders. Such cases are not rare, nor can they ever become common-place through repetition, and they constitute the highest joy and reward of the true teacher. Such cases compensate him for all his other pains and toils. Such rare men come not infrequently from obscure places, without patronage or help, and yet, with God's blessing, do great works for themselves and their fellow men. Blessings on the toils of men who so honor our common manhood.

The two results reached by these two classes are as widely different as the results to two ships which leave the same harbor to cross the same ocean for a common port, the one of which reaches the port in safety, and the other is wrecked. Indeed, the results reached by the two classes of young men in this and other literary institutions may be thus marked: the one, "a prosperous voyage," the other, "shipwreck." I have said you, my young friends, have just started on a voyage, and the question forces itself on us for an answer, What is to be its termination? a prosperous voyage, or a shipwreck?

We are to recognize the hand of God in all things. If He do not aid us our best efforts will be in vain; but, while recognizing this truth, I venture to assert that the question will be answered mainly by determining who shall be your *advisers*, and what shall be the *advice* you follow. The Centurion chose the ship-master as his adviser, and was shipwrecked. Had he chosen Paul he would have escaped the catastrophe. My young friends, who shall be *your* advisers, and what advice

shall *you* follow? There are *books* which offer themselves as the advisers of youth—books which teach them to scoff at religion and virtue; there are pamphlets and newspapers whose pages reek with vileness and the deeds of profligate and bad men; there are books of various forms and styles which advise men to live regardless of God and His Son Jesus Christ. Shall these books be your advisers? Will you follow their advice? Do you say, yes? Then your voyage cannot but terminate in shipwreck.

But here is a Book which offers itself as the adviser of youth. “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word.” The histories related in it are authentic and very ancient—by many hundreds of years more ancient than the oldest Greek narratives, and these histories are true. Its philosophy is profound; its poetry charming; its morality pure; its religion divine; its advice such as might be expected from the infinitely great and good Father in heaven to his little, ignorant children on earth. All who have heeded this advice have grown better, purer, happier; their path has been like that of the sun, shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. This book flames light into the dark and hard places of life, and down into the grave itself. This book of advice has no peer. The like of it was never written and never can be. It stands alone as God’s book of advice to the young, and indeed to all.

And, young men, which shall you choose for your advisers, the books which teach infidelity and immorality, or *this* book, on whose every page God has left his own uncounterfeitable sign-manual? Take the former, and your voyage must terminate in shipwreck; take the latter, and it shall end in glory.

In this College, among your own selves, and not only in this town but everywhere else, you can find those who, both by example and precept, shall advise you to drink intoxicating liquors, in violation of your honor as members of the institution and your duty as moral beings, to visit the places where they are sold, and where, perhaps, the arts of stealing are acquired at the billiard table, the card table, or the faro bank; they will advise you not to be so silly as to be afraid of form-

ing any bad habit, as if such great and strong men as you cannot control yourselves and resist any temptations, however strong! Oh, yes, you will find men who shall give you most strange and dangêrous advice, and enforce it by their own example. My soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united; for often in their malignity do they slay men, and in their self-will they even dig down the walls of many a happy home! These advisers of youth are so intent on destroying virtue, and truth, and honor, so bent on the destruction of the innocent and the unwary, that their very sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall, as if in failing to destroy some they had even failed in duty. Strange wickedness! and yet it is found here, and some who practice this atrocious wickedness offer themselves as your advisers.

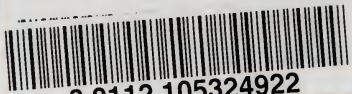
There are other advisers who tell you to scorn that which is mean, to avoid that which is polluted, and to be so afraid even of the place of sin as not even to pass that way. They entreat you to abhor that which is evil and to cleave to that which is good. They point you to God, whose goodness is displayed on every side, and advise you to love and obey Him. They point to our Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross to save you, and advise you to believe in him to the salvation of your souls. They point you to the beauty and desirableness of a useful and virtuous life, and advise you to attain it. They point you down to the dreadful hell, and advise you to escape it. They point you up to the glorious heaven, and advise you to win it.

Which of these two classes of advisers will you heed? Shall it be those who solicit you to the places of sin and the courses of infamy, or those who would lead you along the narrow but shining path of virtue, honor, piety, goodness? Tell me, my young friends, who are to be your advisers, and I will confidently predict whether the voyage you are now beginning in such favorable and pleasant circumstances shall have a prosperous close or end in shipwreck. It is a great and thrilling question, which I once more, in this closing sentence, ring in your hearing, **WHO SHALL BE YOUR ADVISERS?**

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