

# Act in Haste; Repent in Leisure

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

## Introduction:

- A. "Act in haste; repent in leisure." Propere age, otiose paenitere (William Congreve, 1693)
- B. Acts 19:23-41 - The making of a riot
  - 1. They feared that the Gospel would adversely impact their way of life - Acts 19:24-27
  - 2. They incited the public with fear of lost income and well-being.
  - 3. This fear rapidly spread throughout the city, even among people did not understand what was happening - Acts 19:29, 32
  - 4. The people shouted an empty slogan for two hours - Acts 19:34
  - 5. A city administrator was able to calm the people down by getting them to think - Acts 19:35-37
- C. Acting in haste without thinking creates situations that harm and haunt us for years, possibly a lifetime
  - 1. Prov. 29:20 - "Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him."
  - 2. "I think the two things most opposed to good counsel are haste and passion; haste usually goes hand in hand with folly, passion with coarseness and narrowness of mind." (Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War)
  - 3. "Haste denies all acts their dignity." (Dante Alighieri, Purgatorio)
  - 4. "Truth is confirmed by inspection and delay; falsehood by haste and uncertainty." (Tacitus)
  - 5. "Unreasonable haste is the direct road to error." (Moliere)

## I. PRESSURE TO ACT IN HASTE

- A. Many people and circumstances exert pressure on us to make quick decisions
  - 1. Sales personnel - "It's only available for a limited time, prices can't be guaranteed, and others waiting to buy this very item."
  - 2. Business leaders and supervisors - "You have a deadline, get it done yesterday, I don't care what you have to do to finish it"
  - 3. Scam-artists - "I must have it right now, a life is at stake, I will lose my family or home"
  - 4. Politicians - "The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed – and hence clamorous to be led to safety – by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary." [H.L. Mencken, In the Defense of Women, 1920]
- B. Errorists and false teachers use the same techniques stir up the crowd into precipitous action - "Jesus is coming soon, the government, stock market, world peace is about to crash, the world is going to be destroyed by a comet next year, the church is going to be shut down by the ACLU, etc."

- C. People who make quick decisions frequently make wrong decisions.
  - 1. They don't take the time to gather the facts. They don't research the best course. They don't consider other alternatives.
  - 2. A poorly considered request or warning nearly always favors the asker, and often harms the one asked

## II. OVERCOMING ACTING IN HASTE

### A. Gather the facts

- 1. Prov. 13:16 - Prudence acts with knowledge. A panic situation doesn't allow time to gather information.
- 2. People call the building all the time asking for help, presenting it as an urgent situation, and claiming to be members of the church. I have learned to ask: "With what congregation do you assemble?" or "Who can I call at that congregation to confirm your situation?"
  - a. Waiting a few hours may be uncomfortable for someone truly in need, it is rarely a life or death situation. If a person needs help, a short wait won't make a difference. Most hang up at that point
- 3. Prov. 19:2, 18:15 - Seek first to be informed.

### B. Use caution - Prov. 14:15-16

- 1. Prov. 22:3 - The naive overlooks potential danger
- 2. Prov. 12:23 - Don't reveal everything you know
  - a. People instinctively want to connect with others; they fill in the blanks in a conversation with assumptions to facilitate a connection. Liars, con artists, and so called psychic know this and use it against their marks
  - b. Let the one applying the pressure provide the facts and then challenge the facts for confirmation - 1John 4:1

### C. Plan carefully in advance

- 1. Prov. 21:5 - General resolutions and decisions should be considered in advance and held in reserve. Potential problems must be thought of before they occur.
  - a. It won't save us in every situation, but it will minimize difficulties in most. For example, what would you do if you lost your job tomorrow? Or if your house burned? Or if your car broke down?
  - b. Most would panic. But with a general idea of the things that can be reasonably done, bad decisions can be avoided.
- 2. Psalm 4:4 - Meditate on your bed.
  - a. Think about what would please God, what would reflect His wisdom and righteousness - Prov. 6:6-11
- 3. Forethought will reveal that things need to be done in a specific order.
  - a. Teens, what should you do first when it is time to leave home?
  - b. "I need a place to live. I need a car. I need to find a good job."
  - c. Prov. 24:27 - Find a job first, then you can afford a place to live and a car to drive.

### III. AVOIDING HASTE IN OUR FAITH

- A. Occasionally in our eagerness to have people saved, we unwittingly press them into an ill-considered decision.
  - 1. We must not be hasty in our approach to God - Ecc. 5:1-2
  - 2. Every prospect must consider the cost of becoming a Christian
    - a. Luke 14:26-33
    - b. Christianity is not a religion of convenience, but of commitment
    - c. It is an important decision that must not be put off, but cannot be made in haste.
  - 3. It takes knowledge, forethought, and planning to be acceptable to God.
- B. Sometimes in our haste to overcome a temporary, physical problem, we sacrifice eternal, spiritual blessings
  - 1. Out of a necessity for a better job, moving where the church is weak or there is no church at all
  - 2. In a panic to preserve peace at home, compromising our faith or morals
  - 3. In fear of declining numbers at church, adopting erring practices
  - 4. Is quickly resolving a temporary problem going to cause us to regret that decision in eternity?
  - 5. The worst suffering in hell will be regretting what might have been
  - 6. Vernon Teagarden likes to say of me that I “don’t shoot from the hip,” which is a hillbilly way of saying that I take a long time to come to a decision. It is because I have learned that the greatest mistakes I have made in life that cause me and others the most pain and regret have been words spoken or actions taken in haste without taking time to think
  - 7. Imagine spending eternity regretting hasty words or actions; imagine spending every moment in hell remembering a hasty decision to solve a minor temporary problem with an eternal compromise of your faith
  - 8. There is not “And they all lived happily ever after” in this sermon.