

counselor before seeking their advice? Is there a way of protecting ourselves from bad advice? Let me suggest some biblical principles that will enable us to be better informed on how to choose good counsel.

Most importantly, it is vital that we understand that the best counsel is always Divine counsel. The Psalmist declared, "I will bless Jehovah, who hath given me counsel; Yea, my heart instructeth me in the night seasons" (Psa. 16:7), and "Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, And afterward receive me to glory" (Psa. 73:24). "This also cometh forth from Jehovah of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom" (Isa. 28:29). Jeremiah also tells us that the Almighty is "great in counsel" (Jer. 32:19).

How does the Lord give us counsel today? God gives us counsel today through the Bible. Paul says, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It is of the utmost importance to remember that if we ever receive counsel that violates biblical counsel – we know that counsel is bad and should not be heeded. A good counselor will ALWAYS use the Bible as his guide.

Another important bit of advice in choosing counsel is that we should listen carefully to "old men's counsel" (1 Kgs. 12:13) and be cautious of the counsel of "the young men" (1 Kgs. 12:8). Rehoboam failed to do this and was the contributing factor in the dividing of the kingdom of Israel (1 Kgs. 12). Those of many years have a great amount of wisdom and experience that can be very valuable in our decision making process. Beware of the counsel of the youthful. This has been the downfall of many congregations – heeding the ill-informed or misinformed advice of young preachers/youth ministers coming out of liberal colleges. Please do not forsake the counsel of the older and biblically sound men of the congregation.

We also need to listen to the counsel of several that we may weigh their advice with other advice given enabling us to make the proper choices. "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Pro. 11:14). "Where there is no counsel, purposes are disappointed; But in the multitude of counselors they are established" (Pro. 15:22). One may have certain insights in an area, or experience in an area that others may not have. Limiting our counsel will limit our chances of getting good advice or the best advice. We may also think of it as a kind of "check and balance" system, which may prevent us from making wrong decisions.

Remember, "he that hearkeneth unto wise counsel is wise" (Pro. 12:15).

## Older, But Not Necessarily Wiser Jason Patrick Hilburn

As a general rule, heeding advice from those older than us is wise and recommended (Lev. 19:32; Deut. 32:7; Prov. 1:8; 4:1-4, etc.); however, there can be exceptions. Remember that it was the older prophet who led the younger prophet astray and to his death (1 Kings 13). It was the younger generation who had the faith and courage to take the promised land of Canaan (Num. 13, 14; Josh. 3). It was young David who had more wisdom and faith than his older brothers and King Saul (1 Sam. 17). It was young Daniel and the other Hebrew youths who had more wisdom and faith than the most powerful king on earth and all his advisers. Timothy was a young man who was trying to teach and preach, and some older than him would be hesitant to listen to him, simply because of his youth. Paul therefore told him to conduct himself in such a way that no person could doubt him simply based on his age: *"These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity"* (1 Tim. 4:11,12).

In years past as a younger Christian trying to teach others the Truth, I have often heard, "I've been studying the Bible longer than you've been alive!" This type of response comes from people who realize they are wrong, but are unwilling to change. Instead of humbly admitting their error and changing, their pride is clearly revealed, and they resort to personally attacking the messenger (Gal. 4:16). Maybe they have studied longer than I have been alive, and maybe they really have read the whole Bible five times, but that does not prove they are correct! *"Let God be true, but every man a liar"* (Rom. 3:4; 1 Thess. 5:21). I have been blessed to learn great things from both younger people and older people on many occasions, and only a fool rejects Truth simply because it comes from a younger person: *"Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished"* (Eccl. 4:13; cf. Matt. 18:3; 19:13, 14).

It's also a shame when younger Gospel preachers who are zealously standing for the Truth are admonished to stop by the elders of the congregation or older preachers. In fact, sometimes it is a younger preacher who has to refute error taught by older brothers in Christ. Even when done respectfully, some respond, "Young man, how dare you question what this older brother teaches?" I have never understood such a mindset. Someone has to step up, for the sake of souls, and if the older generation will not do it, then the younger must (Num. 13, 14; 1 Sam. 17:32-37; Ezek. 22:30; 1 Tim. 4:11-16). Ultimately, the criterion for determining whether something is right or wrong is not the age of the person involved, but whether the action aligns with God's Word.

May we always love and respect those older than us (1 Tim. 5:1, 2), but remember that sound words can also come from younger people. Any advice or doctrine conflicting with God's Word must be rejected, even if coming from an older person. *"The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness"* (Prov. 16:31, emp. JPH).