**With or Against God?**

***33****When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them.****34****But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while.****35****And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men.****36****For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing.****37****After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered.****38****So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail;****39****but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” So they took his advice,****40****and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.****41****Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.****42****And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus. (Acts 5:33-42, ESV)*

 The Church is called to discern between Christian and non-Christian works, and to encourage the Christian ones, the Christ-centered ones to be performed and lived out.

 Greetings to you dear brothers and sisters as we talk today about discernment. Which works are from God, and which are anti-God? In these days, there is a sore need for Holy Spirit-inspired, wise discernment among believers. Today, even some segments of the church have not been able to discern as to the source of inspiration of certain teachings, doctrines, and moral philosophies, which are link to our and our children’s’ everyday lives. Therefore, today we’re going to examine the circumstances of our Scripture topic, as well as see what we can receive from the words of our Scripture passage in question. Let’s move to the situation as well as its application in our lives…

 The fruits of a movement or an idea are what prove the origins of its inspiration. The witness of the early Christian church was moving along powerfully. Peter and the other Apostles were preaching boldly, and the people had begun to awaken to the big mistake that their own Jewish religious leadership had made in their rejection of Christ. However, the Apostle’s goal was to preach Christ Resurrected, and if it so happened that the results of the preaching was negative among the Jewish religious leadership, that was not the Apostles’ responsibility. (They were simply responsible to preach the Gospel). However, the Jewish leadership had come to their wits’ end regarding this issue, and they were planning on killing the Apostles. In that moment, Gamaliel, the teacher of the law stood up and wisely said the following:

 “*Stay away from those people, and leave them alone, because if that work that they are doing is of human origin, then it will be destroyed – but if it is from God, then you will not be able to destroy it, but you might be found opposing God.”*

 However, the rest of the leadership could not control themselves and they still beat the Apostles and tried again to stop the preaching of Christ with their threats. The Apostles were becoming even more joyful as they continued to do God’s work.

 This is like when someone does a good deed, but their boss does not wish for the person to get recognition from someone higher than him. So, the boss tries to denigrate the worker’s reputation – in the end, however, a right, pure work, since it comes from God, will bear up under all kinds of pressures and advance.

 As a church, we are doing the work of God. However, it is quite often that we need to discern the source of inspiration of certain deeds, both within the church as well as outside. We must be able to discern the source of works done in the culture at large.

 For example, if there is a new idea that is spreading about theft being acceptable as long as you give the poor a part of what you have stolen, what will be your response to this movement or idea? Or let’s think about the commandment not to have idols from God.

 What would you say if suddenly someone gave you some beautiful presents for your home that kept grabbing your attention? What if they started taking time away from your life, your mental activity, and even your soul began to feel connected to them? Would you be able to discern it if something or some idea within the church turned into or became an idol? What about within your home, or at your neighbor’s, or in your cultural circles?

 Discernment is the ability to tell or ascertain right from wrong. However, human discernment is not helpful in life – rather, it is the discernment that comes from God that is needed badly in this world today. The work that is inspired from God, that will proper. The work that is of human inspiration or from the devil will either remain fruitless or give rotten, poisonous fruit. My prayer is that each of us becomes able to discern the origin of the works around us, the works within us, within the church, and within our circles, as to which works are from God, and which are empty or bound to fail. May God give us the eyes to see the works that are from Him, to do them, instead of standing against them; for whoever stands against God’s work will be fighting against God, and he or she will definitely lose that fight.

 The fruits of a movement or idea decide the origin of inspiration. The Church is called to discern the Christian and non-Christian deeds, and to encourage the spiritual ones, those focused on Christ, to be lived out and performed. God bless you all, Amen.