

November 21, 1928

I read this lesson this morning not so much for what applies to the church but because it reveals a situation that quite often exists today just as in Paul's day. After all, human beings respond to certain stimuli today just as they did a thousand years ago.

Paul was in trouble, the Jews were against him and the centurion went down and took him away from the Jews. The chief captain decided he would put the screws on him as we say today and punish this fellow to try to find out something about him. It was then that he found out that this man was a Roman and Lysias got frightened and had Paul's chains released but he wanted to find out the truth so he had the court of the Jews to come and try him and right at the beginning of the trial the High Priest was determined to see if Paul was guilty and Paul spoke back in rather severe terms and someone standing next to Paul said, "Do you know that is the High Priest?" So Paul apologized and said he did not know that he was the High Priest for he knew he was supposed to give due deference to an officer being a good citizen of the community. Knowing that the people that were trying him were divided into two groups, the Sadducees and Pharisees, he said he was a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee and immediately they split in two factions and some of the folks said that he was all right, and that he might be an angel of God and the Sadducees said kill him. Their prejudice was stronger than their sense of justice. This gives us a picture of the religious strife that was on among the Jews themselves. They were just like folks are today.

Almost any church, I do not care which one you take, is divided into two parties and one party will say that the preacher is the finest preacher they

have ever had and the other will say that he is the worst. They let their prejudice enter in and take preference over the great work the church is supposed to do and they begin to tear the church to pieces.

We people in America are divided into two great parties, they do not look great when it looks like all of the states went the same way. But the popular vote shows there are two great parties. It is nothing unusual for a person to come out and say emphatically that the other side has no sense and that a man is absolutely wrong and the other side does the same thing and we fight it out to the election and instead of being a good citizen we keep on fighting. It behooves us as good citizens whether we win or lose in the election to give to the officer our wholehearted support. That does not mean that we ought not to work in the next election for our party but it does mean that the election decided whether this one or that one should be the first executive of this nation because Hoover is not the President of the Republican party, Hoover is to be the President of the United States. He is to be our President whether we voted for him or not. The people of the United States have said that he shall be our executive.

The same thing takes place in a very much smaller scale in the class elections or the student government elections. It is all right to fight for your candidate, to do everything you can in a fair and square way but after the election is over, if you win or if you lose, make the officer that wins your officer and give her your support. I mean your wholehearted support. That is being a good citizen.

Now as we look back over this lesson I have read you this morning we see that Paul was a right good psychologist. He was a smart man and he was one of the best educated men of his day and every time he comes out safely. It is a good example for us to follow whether we be Christians or Jews. He used the prejudice of his group to save himself. I suppose anything like that is always

fair in war. They say love and war but I do not know about love as it has been so long since I have engaged in that.

You are going out from this school to teach, you are not going to find a united community but you will find one faction working against the other. They may unite for a while and work with you but as soon as one gets in control then they begin making trouble. You will need every bit of psychology you can get not only in your class rooms but in your community.

And you know people in church affairs get quite bitter. A certain little town in eastern North Carolina was divided almost evenly between two churches. There was a third group of two families living in that town, but that was too small a group to amount to anything. These two groups got to wrangling about a teacher for the school and finally one got a majority and they wrote to their church school and the school recommended a certain young man and the other church felt a little sore about it. But when he came they found out that he did not belong to the church of either one of the two groups but instead he belonged to the third group with only two families. The church that lost had the laugh on the church that won and the church that won had to support the man they had chosen. This teacher gave this little community the best school they ever had.

---Robert H. Wright, President