

## ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

### XLIX. God's Edifying Use Of Conflicts In The Ministry

(Acts 19:8-20)

#### I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 351. We can thus learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the book of Acts.
- B. Acts 19:8-20 records how Paul faced several significant conflicts in his ministry at Ephesus, but how God graciously used each one of them to further His own discipling objectives in amazing and edifying ways.
- C. We thus view the passage for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

#### II. God's Edifying Use Of Conflicts In The Ministry, Acts 19:8-20.

- A. When Jesus gave the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 ESV, He said that all power was given unto Him in heaven and in earth, and that He was with His messengers always, even unto the end of the age.
- B. The infinite authority, power and assistance of Christ in the Great Commission is seen in even His sovereignly edifying use of spiritual conflicts in the ministry of the Apostle Paul in Acts 19:8-20 (as follows):
  1. When Paul came to Ephesus, he entered the Hebrew synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, "reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God," Acts 19:8 ESV.
  2. However, some in the synagogue "became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil" of his beliefs before the congregation, so Paul withdrew from them, taking disciples with him to reason daily in the public lecture hall of Tyrannus, Acts 19:9 ESV. "One Greek manuscript adds that the school was available from 11 a. m. to 4 p. m., when most people would have their noon meal and an afternoon 'siesta,'" Ibid., p. 410. "The rest of each day Paul worked with his own hands (Acts 20:34)," Ibid.
  3. Paul continued to minister in this public lecture hall for two years, and since people traveled to and from the major city of Ephesus throughout the province of Asia, all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Hebrews and Greeks, in this public setting, Acts 19:10. God thus turned the conflict Paul had with the people in the synagogue into a wider, public setting of the lecture hall to evangelize all Asia!
  4. In addition, God was with Paul contradicting the errant beliefs of his Hebrew critics in the synagogue:
    - a. Since Paul was a tentmaker (cf. Acts 18:3), he labored with work aprons that would become soiled with perspiration so that he would eventually discard them in the city dump.
    - b. Demon possessed people and physically handicapped or diseased people who rifled through the city dump looking for food would accidentally touch one of Paul's discarded work aprons, and upon doing so, be healed, so people began passing these aprons around for healing and for exorcising demons, Acts 19:11-12. Such miracles countered the legalistic beliefs of Paul's Hebrew critics who still clung to the rules of the Law, for they considered such discarded aprons to be ceremonially unclean so as not to be touched!
  5. However, some Jewish exorcists, seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish high priest, tried to use the name of Jesus Whom Paul preached to exorcise demons from people, saying in one case, "I adjure you by the Jesus, whom Paul proclaims," to come out of a demon possessed man, Acts 19:13-14 ESV.
  6. However, the evil spirit answered, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" before the man with the evil spirit leaped upon them and overpowered them all so that they fled out of the house naked and injured, Acts 19:15-16 ESV. This incident became known to both Jews and Greeks throughout Ephesus, for the Jews always criticized the Greeks for running naked in their athletic games, and now Jews were seen running injured and naked in public! (Acts 19:17a)
  7. Great fear fell on all who heard about this event, and the name of Jesus Whom Paul preached was highly esteemed. Many professing Christians came and confessed and divulged their practices and some who had practiced the magic arts brought their books and burned them in the sight of all, Acts 19:17b-19a ESV. They counted the value of these articles, finding them to be worth "about 138 years' pay for a rural laborer," nearly \$5 million in today's money! (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Acts 19:19)
  8. Thus, the word of the Lord continued to increase and mightily prevail, Acts 19:20 ESV.

**Lesson:** *Conflicts that Paul faced from unbelieving Hebrews were used of God greatly to augment the outreach and effectiveness of Paul's ministry at Ephesus.*

**Application:** *May we not dread facing conflicts in ministry but trust our Sovereign Lord to use them for His glory.*