

DISCIPLING THE HARDENED ABUSED OR ESTRANGED

Part III: Following God In A Confrontation Ministry

(Acts 18:5-18)

I. Introduction

- A. Several believers have recently shared their concerns about discipling hardened abused or estranged people.
- B. We thus give five lessons on discipling such people, with this third lesson on following God's lead in a confrontational ministry with hardened abused or estranged people:

II. Following God In A Confrontation Ministry, Acts 18:5-18.

- A. In discipling others, the Apostle Paul sought not to be carelessly offensive to Jews, Gentiles or to the Church of God, but self-sacrificially to be pleasant to all men, seeking their welfare in Christ, 1 Corinthians 10:32-33.
- B. However, we established before in this lesson series that hardened abused or estranged people are controlled by their sin natures and thus exhibit desires that conflict with the desires of the Holy Spirit, Galatians 5:16-23.
- C. Thus, as in Paul's experience, one's best effort to be pleasant with hardened abused or estranged people may not always produce amiable results, but lead to opposition from hardened abused or estranged parties:
 - 1. When Paul came to Corinth, he testified in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 that his preaching had not been marked by "eloquence or superior wisdom" (1 Cor. 2:1 NIV) and "wise and persuasive words" (1 Cor. 2:4 NIV), but that he ministered "in weakness and fear, and with much trembling" (1 Cor. 2:3 NIV).
 - 2. Indeed, Acts 18:9-10 reports that the Lord then had to give Paul a night vision at Corinth to encourage him to speak without fear, for God was with him, and God would protect him from the physical retaliations he had known earlier in his missionary travels when he had been stoned and left for dead in Acts 14:19. God had many people in Corinth who would respond affirmatively to the Gospel that Paul preached.
 - 3. However, Acts 18:5b-6a NIV reports that when Paul testified to his beloved countrymen (Romans 9:1-3) in Corinth that Jesus was the Messiah, they "opposed" (*antitasso*, Arndt & Gingrich, *A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T.*, 1967, p. 75) Paul and "became abusive" toward him, that expression "became abusive" translating (*blasphemeo*) from the Greek text that means "defame, injure the reputation of" (Ibid., p. 142).
- D. Since this confrontation was caused by spiritual dynamics involved, not by avoidable human offenses by Paul, he reacted to it in God's will by holding to his stance for the sake of the truth that he taught, Acts 18:6b,c,d, 7:
 - 1. Paul "shook out" (*ektinasso*, Ibid., p. 245) his clothes, an act in the culture and context of Hebrew onlookers that was "a gesture protesting innocence" (Ibid.) on Paul's part, Acts 18:6b.
 - 2. He then said that the blood of his Hebrew hearers would be on their own heads (Acts 18:6c), a Hebrew Old Testament expression that assigned one's future demise to be the result of one's own sinfulness (cf. Ezekiel 18:13). Paul thus clarified to his Hebrew opponents that they were going to answer to God for their opposition to His Biblical ministry!
 - 3. Paul further said that he would go to the Gentiles (Acts 18:6d), and he left his confrontational countrymen to enter the house of Justus who worshipped God, and whose house was right next to the very synagogue that his foes often attended, Acts 18:7. Paul was certainly keeping his stand before his opponents.
- E. Paul never gave up his strong stand against his Hebrew opponents at Corinth: Acts 18:11 reports that he continued in the city for another eighteen months, teaching the Word of God.
- F. Paul's continued ministry effort was eventually legally countered by his Hebrew foes: they brought charges against him before Gallio, proconsul of Achaia, Acts 18:12-13; *Ryrie St. Bib., KJV*, 1978, fn. to Acts 18:12.
- G. When Paul was about to respond to their charges in the case, Gallio dismissed the case, claiming that it involved controversies in the Hebrew religion over which he had no jurisdiction to rule, Acts 18:14-16.
- H. Paul thus stayed in Corinth a great while longer, continuing to minister there, Acts 18:17-18.

Lesson: *Though Paul tried his human best not to be offensive to his fellow countrymen at Corinth, when they wickedly resisted his ministry, Paul viewed that resistance as a matter of spiritual conflict. Accordingly, he stood his spiritual ground, and God endorsed Paul's stand by moving the secular authority Gallio to rule in Paul's favor that he might continue to keep ministering in opposition to his Hebrew opponents.*

Application: *When we seek to be humanly non-offensive to hardened abused or estranged people, but they overtly resist our spiritual stand, we must view that opposition as a spiritual conflict and not back away from our stand! We must look to God for further guidance and encouragement like Paul did when he received Christ's vision that he was to continue to minister amid continual opposition from his countrymen!*