

Acts 5:39

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

Analysis

Gamaliel's warning climaxes with the sobering possibility of fighting 'against God' (Greek: theomachoi). This phrase captures the futility and danger of opposing divine purposes. While Gamaliel spoke better than he knew, his logic is sound: human power cannot overthrow what God establishes. This principle comforts persecuted believers—our vindication is certain because God's purposes cannot fail. No weapon formed against God's work shall prosper.

Historical Context

The concept of fighting God appeared in Greek literature describing Titans' futile war against Zeus. Jewish theology understood opposing God's prophets as opposing God Himself. Gamaliel's warning carried weight because Pharisees believed in divine providence governing history, unlike materialistic Sadducees.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the impossibility of successfully fighting God encourage believers facing powerful opposition?
2. In what areas might we unwittingly fight against God by opposing what we fail to recognize as His work?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	δὲ	ἐκ	θεοῦ	ἐστιν	οὐ	δύνασθε	καταλῦσαι
if	But	of	God	it be	ye cannot	G1410	overthrow
G1487	G1161	G1537	G2316	G2076	G3756		G2647

αὐτὸ,	μήποτε	καὶ	θεομάχοι	εὑρεθῆτε
it	lest haply	even	to fight against God	ye be found
G846	G3379	G2532	G2314	G2147

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 21:30 (Parallel theme): There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

Isaiah 46:10 (Parallel theme): Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

Matthew 16:18 (Parallel theme): And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Acts 7:51 (Parallel theme): Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

Acts 11:17 (References God): Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

1 Corinthians 1:25 (References God): Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Acts 6:10 (Parallel theme): And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

Acts 9:5 (Parallel theme): And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Job 34:29 (Parallel theme): When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only:

Luke 21:15 (Parallel theme): For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

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