

"The Disagreement"**Acts 15:32-41**

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we ended by considering the repercussions of the decision made by the church at Jerusalem concerning the Gentiles. Many of the Jews wanted the Gentiles to become like Jews in order to become Christians. They wanted them to be circumcised and to be made to keep the Law of Moses. But the Apostles and the elders determined that salvation was by faith plus nothing and they therefore would not put a yoke upon the Gentiles that they would never be able to carry. They did, however, give them a list of things which they needed to abstain from.

Notice Acts 15:29

This exhortation was given so that the Gentiles would not offend the Jews and the door to share the Gospel would be kept open. This decision was very offensive to the Judaizers which in turn brought more persecution upon the church. The Judaizers viewed the saved Jews as pro-Gentile compromisers and keep in mind that they were under the Romans who were oppressing them greatly. The Judaizers then saw the believing Jews as compromisers with the Romans. The Gentiles who were getting saved were Romans. This choice by the Jerusalem church was pleasing to the Gentile believers but it was a slap in the face to the Judaizers.

Notice Acts 15:30-31**"Planning the Second Missionary Journey"****Notice Acts 15:32-34**

Judas and Silas were both prophets which means they were given new revelation from God which they then taught to the Gentile believers. Keep in mind that this New Testament church did not have a New Testament Bible. When the church began, they were taught by the Apostles.

Acts 2:41-43

⁴¹ *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*

⁴² *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

⁴³ *And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.*

Now here in Acts 15 God will use two men who are not Apostles to lead the church in the Truth. We need to specify that the spiritual gift of prophecy does not exist today because we have the completed Bible. It existed here in Acts 15 because the Bible was not complete but once the Scriptures were completed this gift no longer existed.

1 Corinthians 13:8

⁸ *Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; [cause to cease or come to an end] whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*

Notice Acts 15:35

The church at Antioch did not lack teachers. There was Judas, Silas, Barnabas, Paul, and others who are not named. This was a church that was strong in sound doctrine, stood strong against false doctrine, and had a heart for missions. If more churches had these three characteristics today the world would be a different place. What has happened in many churches today is they have changed to appeal to the world and when the world came in it brought its ways along. Now a great number of church attenders are people of the world that are not saved and in order to cater to this crowd there is compromise. There is now the concern with pastors about being offensive and losing people or losing their position. That concern/fear has caused them to avoid addressing sin and therefore worldly practices are permitted to remain in the church. Let us notice the letter to the church at Thyatira.

Revelation 2:18-20

¹⁸ *And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;*

¹⁹ *I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.*

²⁰ *Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.*

Compromise had become a part of the church at Thyatira. In the city there were trade guilds and many were employed through these guilds. Each of these trade guilds had their own gods which they worshipped and to be part of the guild they had to be involved in the worship of the false gods. Notice the words of Thomas on these guilds and what was happening in the city.

"Pagan worship was associated with trade guilds in that each guild had its guarding god. Guilds for wool workers, linen workers, manufacturers of outer garments, dyers, leather workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave dealers, and bronze smiths were known. Membership in a guild was compulsory if one wanted to hold a position. . . . Guild members were expected to attend the guild festivals and to eat food, part of which had been offered to the god and which was acknowledged as being on the table as a gift from god. At the end of the feast grossly immoral activities would commence."

This woman, Jezebel, was teaching that this practice was perfectly fine for the believers to be involved in. To take a firm stand would be offensive and people may leave. This is where many churches are today. The church at Antioch stood firm and was well grounded.

Notice Acts 15:36

We are not told how much time had passed but after a while Paul had the desire to go back and visit the believers that were saved on the first missionary journey. There would have been two main reasons why Paul desired to visit these believers.

1. They were being persecuted by unbelieving Jews.
2. They were being attacked by false doctrine from believing Jews who were legalists.

Paul was very concerned about the false teaching that was coming at these new believers. That is why he wrote the book of Galatians. The persecution was a concern but the attack by the false doctrine was overly concerning. This attack was by Satan in an attempt to pollute the True Gospel.

Notice Acts 15:37

Barnabas decided that he would take John Mark with them on this follow-up journey. Mark had departed on the first journey for unknown reasons. But now that the first journey was over and the news of how God saved the Gentiles was known, John Mark was interested in going along. One thing to know about Mark was that he was the cousin of Barnabas.

Colossians 4:10

¹⁰ Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)

The phrase "sister's son to Barnabas" means "cousin of Barnabas."

Notice Acts 15:38-41

Paul had a different idea concerning Mark and he refused to travel with him. This point caused such great contention that Barnabas and Paul parted ways and Paul took Silas. I want to take the rest of this study and consider this split.

This had to be very sad for the church. Right before this there was unity among the Apostles and the elders concerning the Gentiles. Then there was the joy of teaching together in the city of Antioch and seeing God at work and now this happens. The question has been addressed by many over the years, "Who was right and who was wrong in this situation?" Let us consider both sides of the debate.

➤ **Some say Paul was right.**

There are several reasons why they lean toward this conclusion.

1. We do not read anywhere about Paul making a mistake when it came to serving the Lord.

We must, however, keep in mind that Paul was human like us and he too sinned.

Romans 7:15-17

¹⁵ For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

¹⁶ If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

¹⁷ Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

2. Barnabas is never mentioned again in the book of Acts after this split.

Because Barnabas is not mentioned again there are Bible teachers that declare that Barnabas was wrong in this situation and God therefore put him on the shelf and he was never used again. They say his ministry came to a complete and total end.

The problem with this reasoning is that the remainder of Acts focuses upon the acts of Paul and if Barnabas was not with him then that is why he is not mentioned. Another problem with this teaching is the men who are mentioned in Acts 1.

Acts 1:13, 26

¹³ And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

²⁶ *And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*

Here are twelve Apostles that are named but after this we only read of Peter, James, and John. None of the nine others are mentioned in Acts or even in the New Testament. Does that mean that they had no fruitful ministries?

Another problem with teaching that Barnabas' ministry was finished is what we read later. Barnabas is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 9 and in Colossians 4 and in neither is there any mention of contention. It seems as though both Paul and Barnabas served the Lord after this split but no longer worked together as a team.

➤ **Some say Barnabas was right.**

There are those who say that Barnabas was correct because Mark was restored.

2 Timothy 4:11

¹¹ *Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.*

So, what do we do with this situation? I do not think we need to choose sides. It is not about who was right and who was wrong. Keep in mind that this was not a doctrinal issue but it was a policy issue. Both men had their convictions and they would not compromise. Paul was a straightforward no nonsense man. Barnabas was a man of great compassion.

Acts 4:36-37

³⁶ *And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,*

³⁷ *Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

Acts 9:26-27

²⁶ *And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.*

²⁷ *But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.*

Conclusion:

What can we learn from this split that took place? Let me give you two lessons from all of this.

1. God can use uncomfortable situations to accomplish His purpose.

From this split there came two missionary teams. Paul and Silas, and Barnabas and Mark. They could now cover twice as much territory.

Romans 8:28

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

2. God can use us even with our flaws.

Mark went on to be profitable to Paul and he also went on to write the Gospel of Luke. The Bible is full of people who were flawed and yet they were used to glorify God. Notice the words of John Whitcomb in closing.

"Moses didn't want to speak to Pharaoh; Moses was not eloquent and he was slow and hesitant in his speech. Abraham lied about his wife. Jacob was a deceiver. John Mark was a deserter. David had an affair and tried to cover it up by having an innocent man killed. Abraham was too old. David was too young. Peter was afraid of a servant girl and denied his Lord. Paul was a murderer and a blasphemer. Jonah ran from God and was disobedient. Gideon and Thomas both doubted. Elijah ran away. Martha was a worrier. Noah got drunk. Samson had all kinds of problems especially with women. Joshua failed to consult the Lord. Solomon's list of failures is too lengthy to recite. And we could go on and on. Isn't it amazing that God could use people like this? God's people are not an impressive lot, but Jesus is a very impressive Saviour. He is superb in who He is and in all that He does. We are so flawed that each one of us is unworthy to be called into the service of the Lord Jesus. But -24- be of good cheer, because there is no bruised reed whom Christ cannot restore and heal. Not one of His people has gone beyond His grace. Not one of us is useless."