

Acts 15 Conflict Within The Body Of Christ June 14 2009

Intro: We have seen how Peter and Paul overcame conflict with the world, and we know that we will also face persecution and trials as we stand for Christ. But what happens if there is conflict within the body of Christ?

1. Define the core issue. (Presenting problem is often not the core problem.)

Acts 15:1-5 (HCSB)

¹ Some men came down from Judea and began to teach the brothers: “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom prescribed by Moses, you cannot be saved!”

² But after Paul and Barnabas had engaged them in serious argument and debate, they arranged for Paul and Barnabas and some others of them to go up to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem concerning this controversy.

³ When they had been sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, explaining in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and they created great joy among all the brothers.

⁴ When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church, the apostles, and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them.

⁵ But some of the believers from the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to command them to keep the law of Moses!”

2. Discuss the problem correctly.

Acts 15:6-21 (HCSB)

⁶ Then the apostles and the elders assembled to consider this matter.

⁷ After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them: “Brothers, you are aware that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the gospel message and believe.

⁸ And God, who knows the heart, testified to them by giving the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us.

⁹ He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

¹⁰ Why, then, are you now testing God by putting on the disciples’ necks a yoke that neither our forefathers nor we have been able to bear?

¹¹ On the contrary, we believe we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way they are.”

¹² Then the whole assembly fell silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul describing all the signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

¹³ After they stopped speaking, James responded: “Brothers, listen to me!

¹⁴ Simeon has reported how God first intervened to take from the Gentiles a people for His name.

¹⁵ And the words of the prophets agree with this, as it is written:

¹⁶ After these things I will return and will rebuild David’s tent, which has fallen down. I will rebuild its ruins and will set it up again,

¹⁷ so that those who are left of mankind may seek the Lord— even all the Gentiles who

are called by My name, says the Lord who does these things,

¹⁸ which have been known from long ago.

¹⁹ Therefore, in my judgment, we should not cause difficulties for those who turn to God from among the Gentiles,

²⁰ but instead we should write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from eating anything that has been strangled, and from blood.

²¹ For since ancient times, Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, and he is read aloud in the synagogues every Sabbath day.”

(Right People, Right Way, Right Perspective)

3. Decisions must be communicated clearly.

Acts 15:22-35 (HCSB)

²² Then the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, decided to select men from among them and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: Judas, called Barsabbas, and Silas, both leading men among the brothers.

²³ They wrote this letter to be delivered by them: From the apostles and the elders, your brothers, To the brothers from among the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings.

²⁴ Because we have heard that some to whom we gave no authorization went out from us and troubled you with their words and unsettled your hearts,

²⁵ we have unanimously decided to select men and send them to you along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

²⁶ who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁷ Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who will personally report the same things by word of mouth.

²⁸ For it was the Holy Spirit’s decision—and ours—to put no greater burden on you than these necessary things:

²⁹ that you abstain from food offered to idols, from blood, from eating anything that has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these things, you will do well. Farewell.

³⁰ Then, being sent off, they went down to Antioch, and after gathering the assembly, they delivered the letter.

³¹ When they read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.

³² Both Judas and Silas, who were also prophets themselves, encouraged the brothers and strengthened them with a long message.

³³ After spending some time there, they were sent back in peace by the brothers to those who had sent them.

³⁴

³⁵ But Paul and Barnabas, along with many others, remained in Antioch teaching and proclaiming the message of the Lord.

4. In some conflicts it is best to divide for a while.

Acts 15:36-41 (HCSB)

³⁶ After some time had passed, Paul said to Barnabas, “Let’s go back and visit the brothers in every town where we have preached the message of the Lord, and see how they’re doing.”

³⁷ Barnabas wanted to take along John Mark.

³⁸ But Paul did not think it appropriate to take along this man who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone on with them to the work.

³⁹ There was such a sharp disagreement that they parted company, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed off to Cyprus.

⁴⁰ Then Paul chose Silas and departed, after being commended to the grace of the Lord by the brothers.

⁴¹ He traveled through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Colossians 4:10 (HCSB)

¹⁰ Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you, as does Mark, Barnabas’ cousin (concerning whom you have received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him),

Philemon 1:24 (HCSB)

²⁴ Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my co-workers.

2 Timothy 4:11 (HCSB)

¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you, for he is useful to me in the ministry.

5. Avoid unnecessary conflicts!

Acts 16:1-5 (HCSB)

¹ Then he went on to Derbe and Lystra, where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a believing Jewish woman, but his father was a Greek.

² The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke highly of him.

³ Paul wanted Timothy to go with him, so he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, since they all knew that his father was a Greek.

⁴ As they traveled through the towns, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem for them to observe.

⁵ So the churches were strengthened in the faith and were increased in number daily.

Hebrews 12:14-15 (HCSB)

¹⁴ Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness—without it no one will see the Lord.

¹⁵ See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springs up, causing trouble and by it, defiling many.