



## Sermon Series Notes

### "Conquering Conflicts Biblically" (Acts 15)

Danny Hodges - NT3638

Intro: We have quite a bit to read, so buckle your Bible seat belts and stay alert. Read Acts 14:21-15:35.

v.19 James held a position of authority in the church. He was probably considered the “senior pastor” of the church at Jerusalem (See Acts 12:17; 21:18; Gal.2:9, 11-12).

What is interesting about the letter and the conclusion these leaders came to is that Paul would violate several “requirements” being made (I Cor.10:25-31). Three out of four actually have little if anything to do with NT spirituality, sexual immorality being the only one that transcends both covenants and is clearly an immoral act. But the main issue being disputed here was what is required for salvation, and on that point they got it exactly right. Though they got it right here, the issue would come up again (Gal.1:6-9; 2:3-5, 11-16).

The doctrinal issue in Acts 15 is an extremely important one: What is required to be truly saved? If we add anything to faith alone for salvation, we have violated the gospel message. The Scriptures are very clear on what is required for salvation (See Eph.2:8-9; Romans 3:19-24; 4:1-12).

So our text teaches us the importance of keeping the gospel message pure and unadulterated. But that’s not all our text teaches us. It teaches us how to settle doctrinal disputes. Go to the Scriptures & let the Scriptures settle the issue. Doctrine can divide the church, and we must determine what doctrines are worth dividing over. Certainly the purity of the gospel message is not only something to defend, but if necessary, something to divide over.

Doctrinal disputes were common in the New Testament, and some also of them also worthy of dividing over (See II Thess. 2:1-5; 4:1-6; I Tim.1:3-7; 4:1-6; II Tim.2:15-18).

Years ago we had to confront another false teaching from a ministry called “Hallelujah Acres,” which alleges that God never intended for man to eat meat.

#### The Hebrew Roots Movement

A few years ago our pastoral staff and elders had to investigate the teaching of Henry Wright. We discovered many biblical errors in his teaching. For example, he teaches that Job’s problems were the result of Job’s fear rather than faith, that Paul’s thorn in the flesh was a result of carnality in his life that he

never got control over, that Timothy's "oft infirmities" were because of sin in Timothy's life. Henry Wright gives 30 spiritual blocks to healing, the 16<sup>th</sup> of which just blew me away when I read it.

"The sixteenth block to healing is simply that our allotted time in life is fulfilled. You know, sometimes we just have to fade away; it is time to go " This to me is one of the most glaring errors of the book. It ignores the reason we die physically, which is clearly a result of SIN still dwelling in the members of our bodies (Gen.2:16-17; Rom.7:17-18, 23; I Cor.15:26-27a, 56-57; Heb.2:5-9).

"God's perfect will is not to heal you. God's perfect will in the Word is that you do not get sick." (p.6, bottom) Henry Wright bases healing on obedience, using OT references from the Law to support his teaching.

If my salvation and righteousness before God are based completely on grace, mercy, and a free gift, why is my physical healing dependent on obedience? The majority of people Jesus healed, as well as recorded healings in the book Acts, had no prerequisite of obedience. The healing of the paralytic by the Pool of Bethesda is one very interesting example; because it says Jesus healed the man first, later found him at the temple, and warned him to stop sinning lest something worse happen to him (John 5, note verse 14).

Hebrews 13:9 Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. Note context vv.7-8.

Then there are plenty of doctrinal differences I personally feel are not worth dividing over. I believe Calvinists & Arminianists should be able to fellowship together in the same sheep pen, but they would both have to agree not to be legalistic in their views, each acknowledging the credibility of the opposing view. If there were not verses that support both sides of the issue there would not be two very large movements called Calvinism & Arminianism!

I believe pre-trib, mid-trib, & even pre-wrath views of the second coming of Christ should not divide believers, but instead challenge us to become even better students of the Word.

And then there are what I used to call disputable matters, but now call issues of stronger & weaker believers (See Rom.14:2, 5, 14, 19, 21).

D.L. Moody ribbed Spurgeon for smoking cigars, and Spurgeon questioned Moody's eating habits. Luther drank beer in the pubs and discussed theology.

We already have an unwritten policy at CCSP on dancing. We believe strongly that some can, and some can't!

Some doctrinal issues are not worth disputing or dividing over, but others certainly are. God grant us wisdom to know which are and which aren't.

Titus 3: 9 But avoid **foolish controversies** and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.

10 Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.

Doctrinal disputes to me are much easier to settle than the dispute that comes next in our text. Read Acts 15:36-41.

This is a personal dispute, and one that neither party can cite Scripture to prove their point or their convictions.

Some commentators suggest that this was God's will and that the missionary efforts of Paul and Barnabas doubled as a result. I do not take that view. My opinion is that this division was unnecessary, and certainly not the will of God.

So how could/should this dispute have been settled?

After Paul & Barnabas split up, the Holy Spirit records the continuing ministry of Paul, but this is the last we hear of Barnabas. The text tells us that Paul was "commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord." In other words, the church sided with Paul. And the Holy Spirit obviously sided with Paul. As I have previously pointed out, Barnabas was initially the leader of this ministry team. But beginning in Acts 13:13, Paul's name begins to appear first.

I believe Barnabas should have submitted to Paul's leadership here. If he had, the dispute would be settled. Paul would later give John a second chance (II Tim.4:11), but here he does not feel it is wise to take John with them. And because he is the leader, the dispute should have ended. Instead, Paul and Barnabas separate, and as far as we know, never again do ministry again on the same team.

Just a reminder how hard this would have been for Barnabas. It was Barnabas who convinced the church in Jerusalem that Saul really had become a Christian. It was Barnabas who went to Tarsus and invited Saul (now Paul) to join his ministry in Antioch. And John Mark is Barnabas' cousin, so this is more than ministry to him, its family. Add to that Barnabas' gift of exhortation (encouragement), and we can more fully appreciate how difficult this was for him. No doubt he believes his opinion and conviction are right. But Paul feels just as strongly about his own opinion.

Ever had a personal dispute with someone and you were absolutely convinced you were right in your opinion and the other person was wrong?  
How recently?

How many who just raised your hands are married?

I have said over the years that ministry is like marriage. If we view Paul & Barnabas' ministry as a marriage, they are now separated, and headed for divorce. And why? Because of a dispute between them that they could not settle.

Dispute: A disagreement, argument, or debate.

A simple difference in perspective can spark a dispute.

One foolish husband said to his wife, "Honey, you stick to the washin', ironin', cookin', & cleanin'. No wife of mine is gonna work."

Have you ever wondered why we have such varied perspectives on things, especially between men and women?

Illus: A fellow was once thinking of how sailors referred to ships as “she” and “her.” He then wondered by what gender computers might be addressed. So he set up two groups of computer experts, the first comprised of women, and the second of men. Each group was asked to recommend whether computers should be referred to in the feminine gender, or the masculine gender. They were asked to give four reasons for their recommendation. The group of women reported that computers should be referred to in the masculine gender because:

1. In order to get their attention, you have to turn them on.
2. They have a lot of data, but are still clueless.
3. They are supposed to help solve problems, but half the time they are the problem.
4. As soon as you commit to one, you realize that, if you had waited a little longer, you could have had a better model.

The men concluded that computers should be referred to in the feminine gender because:

1. No one but the Creator understands their internal logic.
2. The native language they use to communicate with other computers is incomprehensible to everyone else.
3. Even your smallest mistakes are stored in long-term memory for later retrieval.
4. As soon as you make a commitment to one, you find yourself spending half your paycheck on accessories for it.

Things I’ve learned about my wife:

- \* My wife just does not get excited about fishing...or boating...she could care less if I sold the boat tomorrow (Try and relate to that kind of thinking!).
- \* She loves pillows. The only pillow I owned before I was married was the one I slept with. We now have pillows that serve no practical purpose (in my mind). They are just there for looks!
- \* She does not like “conquering the road” when we take long trips in the car.
- \* She takes no pride in not asking for directions when we’re lost.
- \* She has a “need” to talk; I know what you’re thinking, that any man should know this long before he’s married. But here’s the truth. Men know women love to talk, but many have never learned that they NEED to talk.
- \* She does not enjoy COPS, football, UFC, etc.
- \* She does not have the same sexual drive as I do, and I truly cannot relate to that. And she seems to desire conversation before intimacy (????).

The Physiological Differences Between Men And Women

- \* Women have 2x chromosomes, men have an x and y chromosome.
- \* Women have 4/5 of a gallon of blood in their body, while men have 1.5 gallons (generally can work longer, harder than a woman)
- \* Women deteriorate 2% every ten years, men 10% (and increases significantly for men after age 40).
- \* For women, 20% body weight is muscle, while for men, 40% is muscle.

\* Men's bones are heavier, skulls thicker

\* As a result of testosterone, men are more lateral brained, using only one side of the brain at a time (predominantly the left side). Women are more bilateral (but predominantly right brained), which makes them more sensitive to sound and sight, etc. Men basically live in one room at a time, while women can be in several rooms at once...

\* Illus: Subliminal messages on a screen and ask men and women to write down what they see, women would be writing and men would be saying, "Did you see that? What was that?"

\* Illus: They wired microphones to girls and boys ages 2-4 yrs. old and recorded sounds they made. 100% of the girls sounds had something to do with conversation, while only 60% with the boys. 40% of the noises boys made were non-language sounds (car sounds, etc.)

\* Give a boy a stick and what does he do with it? Makes it into a weapon. And a girl, she puts a mop head on top of it and begins talking to it! (Audra talking outside when she was younger).

\* Men are made to be warriors. They are out to conquer. They love competition, challenges, and are generally very objective in their thinking (that's left brain kind of stuff).

\* Women are more feeling oriented, nurturing, relational (that's right brain kind of stuff).

Going on a long trip with the family, the guy is out to conquer! That's why he doesn't want to stop and potty, and why he hurries you through the meal (or suggests we eat in the car). Soon after marriage, men sometimes seem as if they had brain surgery, and the wife wonders what happened to the man she married. But at that altar, he has conquered, and now he's moving ahead full bore with life (fishing, golfing, sports, etc.). Men generally like TV programs such as COPS, cowboy movies, war movies, etc. Women? "Anne of Green Gables." Hunting, a guy can shoot just about anything. Shopping, men cannot understand going from store to store and just looking. They are out to conquer!

But as is reflected in our text, it's not just differences between men and women that can cause conflict. There are scores of things in life that can cause conflict.

Disputes in life are inevitable.

Inevitable: Certain, unavoidable, inescapable.

Doctrinally we see in a glass darkly (I Cor.13; Rom.14:5); There are doctrines that are difficult to understand; See II Peter 3:15-16.

Personally we are imperfect; We have different giftings, personalities, perspectives; The church of Corinth was divided based on leaders in the church that were their favorites (See I Cor.1).

So here are some biblical suggestions for solving disputes/conflicts in life:

- Don't be legalistic about non-essential or unclear doctrine
- Realize disputable matters based on Rom.14
- Submit based on God-ordained authority
  - I Peter 2:13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority.
  - Submission is especially difficult when you know the party on the other end is wrong. See I Peter 2:18-21; 3:1, 7
  - Acts 23:1-5

- David & King Saul
- Submit based on Christ's example (Phil.2:5-8)
  - Ephesians 5:22-23; Note context 5:21; There are times when a husband should submit to a wife because he loves her and is called to sacrifice for her as Christ sacrificed for us.
  - There are times we should submit to someone else's opinion or perspective just to keep the peace.
  - Repeated submission over time is a great challenge; Stumpy & Martha (How many haven't heard the story?). One may submit to another for years, and then, in a moment of weakness, lose it.

The greatest blessing any church, nation, people, or family can experience is peace and unity.

Prov.17:1 Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.

Read Psalm 133

## CONCLUSION

Luke 11:17..."Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall.

Rom.12:18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.