

Old Law Not Binding

Acts 15

- 1st trip went well! Cong. established
- **May** tell the events of Gal. 2:1-10
- No one likes controversy; 2 examples: v. 1-35 doctrinal disagreement; v. 36-41 difference of opinion
- “Question is not: ‘Will we have controversy in the church?’ but ‘How will we deal with controversy when it comes?’” Roper

1. Conference – v. 1-29

- 1: word spread during the journey; more Gentiles in world (and church) than Jews. Solution of some was to have G become J.
- Circumcision: an essential part of OT. Gen. 17:10-14, 23-27; given to Abraham but they linked it to Moses (Law came 500yrs later)
- 2: P&B see this an attack on their work; didn’t go to find truth but discuss it.
- Titus probably went (Gal. 2:13)
- 3: church furnished supplies for trip
- 4: 300mi trip; eldership in every decision: v. 2, 4, 6, 22, 23; gave mission report
- 5: public meeting; Pharisees didn’t talk about how good it was to convert or the value of obedience – they taught the essentiality of becoming a Jew. Necessary: not optional.
- 6: whole church present
- 7: debate: noisy, heated; Judaizing teachers must’ve thought Peter to be sympathetic
- [Peter’s arguments in brackets.]
- 8: [1] Jews looked at superficial characteristics, God looks at the heart. 2nd time God called a “heart knower”
- 9: God made no distinction, Rm. 3:22; [2] hearts cleansed by faith.
- 10: [3] trying to bind parts of Old Law put God to the test; [4] placed yoke too great for any Jew to bear. Fault not with the Law, but man’s failure to keep law perfectly.
- 11: only way we can be saved is through grace.
- 12: Peter’s speech quilted crowd, P&B had great opportunity to tell of journey

- 13: James: ½ brother of Jesus, Mt. 13:55, Ac. 12:17, 21:18, 1 Cor. 15:7, Gal. 1:19. Js. 1:1 (other James beheaded in ch. 12); a pillar of the church, Gal 2:9
- 14: Heb. Name of Simon Peter; Jews disappointed again, Js. used Scriptures to show Gentiles always intended to be a part of God's plans – and they didn't have to become Jews to do so!
- 15: quotes Amos 9:11-12, may have used more (Is. 2:2-4, 49:6, Micah 4:1-4)
- 16-18: Cornelius conversion a fulfillment of prophecy
- 19: should not trouble them by binding circumcision; didn't force opinion on them
- 20: doctrinal resolved; how would Jews coexist? Avoid meat sacrificed to idols (Gentiles ate all their lives, offensive to Jews)
- Avoid fornication (porneia): illicit sexual relations, thoughts (Lv. 18:6-18, avoid close relations)
- Strangled by blood: Gentiles would eat animals still with blood in it and drink blood.
- Why these 3? Sins they struggled with, affected "table fellowship"
- "We've done you a favor in deciding in your favor; you do us a favor by abstaining from what makes us uncomfortable."
- 21: reassure the Law to be taught
- 22: wonderful: whole cong. came to an agreement; send letter to whole church; wisdom in sending letter with representatives
- Little known of Barsabbas (Son of the Sabbath), may be brother of Joseph (1:23); Silas, more familiar – 2nd journey onward; both leaders, same as Heb. 13:17, 24, may have been elders
- 23: common greeting, eventually reached whole brotherhood by journeys
- 24: intense controversy threatened to rip apart
- 25,26: both risked lives on many occasions
- 27: confirm letter genuine, answer ?s
- 28: note inspiration
- 29: remind God did not require Gentiles to be circumcised and keep Law of Moses

2. Letter Delivered – v. 30-35

- 30: went down(hill); read in early assemblies
- 31: rejoiced at decision made, controversy over, requests made not difficult.
- 32: Judas, Silas strengthened audience

- 33: *Go in peace* common farewell
- 34: Silas may have left and later returned
- 35: not sure how long here; Galatians here?

3. Disagreement – v. 36-39

- Ending on a shock as P&B have worked so well together; recorded to allow brethren to learn how to settle disagreements
- 36: indefinite period of time; thought during winter months as travel was difficult; cannot baptize people and ignore them!
- 37: B agreeable but wanted to take JM, his cousin, Col. 4:10 [turned back at Perga 13:13]
- 38: P not happy; kept insisting, imperfect, continuing action. B kept saying take him, P kept saying not
- 39: RSV “a sharp contention,” “an angry feeling” Rotherham, “a sharp clash of opinions” Phillips. GK: loss of temper, heated exchange, cutting words; spilt: B a native of Cyprus would take up the work there; 2 teams

4. 2nd Journey Begins – v. 40-41

- 40: Silas one of the earlier leaders, a prophet; he could speak by inspiration; 16:37 a Rom citizen, could confirm the letter; may have been P’s penman for 1 & 2 Thess. Was penman for 1 Peter (5:12)
- 41: P visits home area of Cilicia as journey begins

Lessons:

1. This chapter is a handy reference for how to deal with disagreements. When they occur over doctrine, we should always consult God’s Word – then do what it says.
2. We are always wise to heed the advice of the elders and those who are well-studied in the Scriptures.
3. A disagreement between two personalities should not detract us from serving God. Instead, like Paul and Barnabas, we should continue serving the Lord in every circumstance.

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