

Addressing Problems

Acts 15



### Dissension and Dispute

- Satan does not leave us alone! 1 Peter 5:8
- Judaizing teachers from the Jerusalem church came to Antioch, teaching Gentiles must be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved. Acts 15:1
- Immediate and large controversy and discussion. Acts 15:2; Galatians 2:4-5

### The Jerusalem Meeting (Acts 15:6-29)

- **Why this meeting?** Acts 15:2
  - Not to decide truth on the subject.
  - Not because the Jerusalem church was the “Mother Church” or “Metropolitan Church” for all of “Christendom” (*Pulpit Commentary*)
  - Not to convene a worldwide council of churches.
  - Not to write a creed for the church.

### The Jerusalem Meeting (Acts 15:6-29)

- **Why this meeting?** Acts 15:2
  - **To know whether the brethren in Jerusalem were teaching the same gospel they were teaching to Gentiles. Galatians 2:1-2; Acts 15:3-7; cf. Galatians 1:6-9**
    - The Antioch church sent them. Acts 15:2-3
    - God said go to Jerusalem. Galatians 2:2
    - The brethren were in agreement. Galatians 2:2-4, 6-9
    - Judaizers were not sent by God or the Jerusalem church. Acts 15:24

## Addressing a Doctrinal Problem

- **Distinguish between what is necessary and what is unnecessary**
  - **NOT NECESSARY FOR SALVATION:** Circumcision and keeping the Law of Moses. Acts 15:1-11
  - No justification from sins by Law of Moses. Acts 13:38-39; Galatians 2:16-19; 3:10-14
  - No distinction between Jews and Gentiles: All are cleansed by faith. Acts 15:7-9, 11
  - Law of Moses a yoke that could not be borne. Acts 15:10 (Galatians 5:1)

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## Addressing a Doctrinal Problem

- **NOT NECESSARY FOR SALVATION:** Circumcision and keeping the Law of Moses. Acts 15:1-11
- All saved through the grace of Christ. Acts 15:11; Galatians 5:4
- Salvation of Gentiles without the Law of Moses was validated by God. (Acts 15:8, 12-19) ...
  - Holy Spirit on Cornelius and house. Acts 15:8, 11:17
  - Miracles attended the preaching of Barnabas and Paul. Acts 15:12 (14:3; 15:3) cf. Hebrews 2:3-4
  - The prophets. Acts 15:13-19 (inclusion of Gentiles in the Messiah's kingdom was the work of God. Acts 15:18)

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## Addressing a Doctrinal Problem

- **How to establish and apply authority.** Acts 15:6-19
  - Apostolic approved example. 15:7-11
  - Necessary inference. 15:12
  - Direct statement. 15:13-19
  - Respect for God's silence. 15:24
  - Our pattern to follow. Colossians 3:17

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## Addressing a Doctrinal Problem

- **NECESSARY THINGS:** Moral and Religious Purity. Acts 15:20, 28-29
  - "The things forbidden are all practices not looked upon as sins by Gentiles ..." (*Pulpit Commentary*)
    - See parallel in Acts 21:25
  - *Idolatry, fornication, things strangled, and blood*
    - Impose "only those necessary things which were necessarily independent of the Mosaic law." (J. W. McGarvey, *Original Commentary on Acts*, pages 185-186)

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## Addressing a Doctrinal Problem

- **Clarify the record so there is no doubt.** Acts 15:22-32
  - Make the truth clear and plain, and thereby identify the false teachers. (15:24)
    - This engenders confidence in gospel authority.
  - Strength is found in common faith and ongoing work. 15:31-33
  - Unity thrives when brethren accept and stand in the truth of God. 15:25; Ephesians 4:1-6 (Amos 3:3)

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## Addressing a Personal Judgment Problem

- Paul and Barnabas agreed on work that needed to be done. Acts 15:36
- Sharp disagreement over taking John Mark. Acts 15:37-40
  - Back story: Acts 13:13 (perhaps, Galatians 2:11-13)
  - Barnabas: Determined to take John Mark
  - Paul: Determined not to take: Not fit (equipped)

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## Addressing a Personal Judgment Problem

- Result: Led to separate areas of work.  
Acts 15:39-40
  - Not a lasting, irreparable separation. Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11
- Lesson: *Do not let personal judgments hinder gospel work!* Acts 15:39-40

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## Acts 15: A Pivotal Chapter

- Universality of the gospel convincingly confirmed.
- Opponents of the revealed truth are identified and resisted.
- Personal opinions will differ at times, but must not be allowed to rupture brotherly relations and harm the cause of Christ.

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