

How Christians Disagree: Acts 15

8-17-14 AM

In Acts 15:36-41 we read about the division that arose between Paul and Barnabas over bringing Mark with them on their journey. The division rose to such a point that they parted ways. Lets understand that there appears to be no animosity in their separation (Paul commended Barnabas in subsequent writings, cf. I Cor. 8-9). They both went out to do the work. Perhaps we should consider this a lesson in how Christians disagree. Christians do disagree. Sometimes it results in catastrophic damage to the church. But it can also accomplish purposes, as we see in Acts 15.

How Christians Disagree

- First: by knowing what is NOT debatable
- Second: by knowing HOW to disagree
- Third: by knowing when not to disagree

First we need to know that some things are not debatable (I Timothy 1:3-4, 2 Timothy 2:14-16, 23, Titus 1:13-16). We are not to have serious disagreements over pedigrees, meaningless opinions (the color of Paul's eyes) , ideas of false teachers, or non-spiritual things (e.g. politics). These things cause strife & disputes, more ungodliness, and the ruin of the hearer. Of course, this means some things ARE debatable, including Doctrine, Teaching, and the applications of doctrine and teaching.

Second, we need to know how to disagree. How can we debate with damage? Acts 15:1-22 is a lesson on disagreement.

- First: a voicing of perspective
- Second: the search of Scripture
- Third: accepting the Truth
- (Fourth: Patience – II Timothy 2:25)

Most importantly to learning how to debate is the need to see that for a debate to successfully arrive t a conclusion that was the will of God, certain things need to be in place. Fundamentally, submission to the Word and to one another (which includes then respect for other believers and respect for Biblical authority).

Finally, we need to learn to be wrong with Grace. We need to be able to concede when we are in error, and admit that “I could be wrong” (I John 1:8). We need to examine ourselves and confirm ask: “Am I contending for the faith, or being contentious for my faith?”(Romans 16:17). It is not worth an eternity of condemnation because we have too much pride to admit we were incorrect.

Summary: Some things are not to be debated (things which cannot be resolved because there is no "truth" to them). Disagreement needs to be respectful and in total submission. Disagreement needs to have an end.