

# Acts 11 - James

by Stephen Kaung

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*James, a brother of Jesus, was transformed from a skeptic to a leading figure in the church in Jerusalem through his faith and conviction.*

**Duration:** 1:12:26

**Scripture:** Acts 15:21-22, Acts 15:24, Acts 15:28, Acts 15:36, Acts 15:41, Acts 16:5

**Topics:** "Body Of Christ", "Spiritual Unity"

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## Description

In this sermon, the minister begins by praising the Lord and asking for His guidance and revelation through His word. The sermon focuses on the formation of the body of Christ according to the divine design. The minister references the book of Acts, specifically chapters 6 to 15, which highlight the formative years of the body of Christ. He emphasizes the period of conflict that the body of Christ went through in order to become a vessel fit for the Master's use. The minister also prays for the congregation to rise above earthly and man-made influences and to be united in love, faith, and knowledge of the Son of God.

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## Transcript

This is Monday evening, February the 5th, 1973, in Richmond, Virginia. Minister being given through Brother Stephen Tong. I have a word of prayer.

O Lord, we do come to Thee together tonight because Thou art the River of Life. We come to drink and to live by Thee. We ask Thee, Lord, that Thou will open Thy word to us and open our hearts to Thee.

May Thy Holy Spirit do the work that Thou dost desire to accomplish. Lord, we are here not just to say something or to hear something, but we are here before Thee. We want Thee to finish Thy work of new creation in and among us and among Thy people everywhere.

So Lord, we do look up to Thee for Thy working tonight in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen. We will please turn to Acts chapter 15.

Acts chapter 15, we'll read from verse 1. And certain persons, having come down from Judea, taught their brethren, If ye shall not have been circumcised according to the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved. A commotion therefore having taken place, and no small discussion on the part of Paul and Barnabas against them. They arranged that Paul and Barnabas and certain others from amongst them should go up

to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question.

They therefore, having been set on their way by the church, passed both Phoenicia and Samaria, relating the conversion of those of the nation. And they caused great joy to all the brethren. And being arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the assembly and the apostles and the elders and related all that God had wrought with them.

And some of those who were of the sect of the Pharisees, who believed, rose up from among them, saying that they ought to circumcise them and enjoin them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and the elders were gathered together to see about this matter. And much discussion having taken place, Peter standing up said to them, Brethren, ye know that from the earliest day God amongst you chose that the nations by my mouth should hear the word of the glad tidings and believe.

And the heart knowing God bore them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit as to us also, and put no difference between us and them, having purified their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why can't ye, God, by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear, but we believe that we shall be saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus in the same manner as they also. And all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul relating all the signs and wonders which God had wrought among the nations by them.

And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Brethren, listen to me. Simon has related how God first visited to take out of the nations a people for his name. And with this agree the words of the prophet, as it is written, After these things I will return, and will rebuild the tabernacle of David which is fallen, and will rebuild its ruins, and will set it up so that the rest of ye of man may seek out the Lord.

And all the nations on whom my name is invoked, says the Lord, who does these things, known from eternity. Wherefore I judge, not to trouble those who from the nations turn to God, but to write to them to abstain from pollution of idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood. For Moses, from generations of old, has in every city those who preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.

Then it seemed good to the apostles and to the elders, with the whole assembly, to send chosen men from among them, with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, Judas called Barnabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, having by their hand written thus, The apostles and the elders, and the brethren to the brethren who are from among the nations at Antioch, and in Syria and Cilicia, inasmuch as we have heard that some who went out from among us have troubled you by words, upsetting your souls, saying that ye must be circumcised and keep the law, to whom we gave no commandment. It seemed good to us, having arrived at a common judgment, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have given up their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves also will tell you by word of mouth the same things.

For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things, to abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what is strangled, and from fornication, keeping yourself from which you will do well. Farewell. They therefore, being let go, came to Antioch, and having gathered the multitude, delivered to them the epistle.

And having read it, they rejoiced at the consolation. And Judas and Silas, being themselves also prophets, exalted the brethren with much discourse and strengthened them. And having passed some time there,

they were let go in peace from the brethren to those who sent them.

And Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and announcing the glad tidings with many others also of the word of the Lord. We mention that from chapter 6 of the book of Acts through chapter 15, these chapters record the formative years of the body of Christ. On the day of Pentecost, the body of Christ came into being.

And then you'll find it began to be formed according to the divine design. And in the formation of this body of Christ according to the heavenly pattern, it went through a period of conflict. And it is through that period of conflict that you'll find it finally came into that new vessel fit for the Master's use.

We may call it the pains of growth. Through the pains of growth finally you'll find it has taken its proper form. Now during this period God raised up a few key men to help to direct this formation according to the heavenly pattern.

And we have mentioned five of them in the past. Stephen as the pioneer of the heavenly way. Through Stephen you'll find the body of Christ, the Church, begins to break away from Judaism.

Because before that time people often considered the Church as part of Judaism. Probably they say it was just another sect in Judaism. But then Stephen was one who had vision.

And in him you'll find his spearhead, as it were, the break of this body of Christ, the Church, from Judaism. And this was further brought forward by Philip. Because through the ministry of Philip the Samaritans were brought into the Church.

You know, there was no relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans. On the day of Pentecost when the Church was formed it was mainly Jews. And to the Jews the Gentiles had no part in the grace, in the blessing of God.

But here were the Samaritans, those that were despised by the Jews, because they were haughty. And yet throughout the ministry of Philip these Samaritans were brought in. But the head purposely withheld the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Until the apostle came and laid a hand upon these believers. Then they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Why? Because in the formation of this body of Christ there will be only one body.

And in that good body both the Jews and the Samaritans were joined into one. This prejudice against each other was eliminated by the cross. And the Holy Spirit just brought them together into one body.

A further move away from Judaism. And then you'll find after Philip came Paul. This master builder.

Paul was a symbol of Judaism. And God shattered his Judaism completely and made him a new vessel for the building of the body of Christ. A special vessel appointed by God.

Then we mentioned about Peter. The apostle to the Jews. And yet God used him to open the door to the Gentiles.

Actually, Philip probably was in sectarianism. Most likely he was. And yet God as it were set aside Philip and sent his angel to Cornelius and said you send messenger to Joppa and get Peter here to tell you how to be saved.

Why? Again you'll find it was to keep the oneness of the body of Christ. Otherwise you will have a Jewish church and a Gentile church. But now because of this you'll find the church is one.

That's Peter. And after Peter we find Barnabas. Barnabas was a man with a big heart.

And he was sent out to visit these churches. Just came into being in the cities of Syria and Cilicia. And he came to Antioch.

He saw the grace of God and he rejoiced in what he saw. He encouraged his brothers and sisters to go on with the Lord. And seeing that the work was so big he went to find Saul and brought him to Antioch.

And together they labored. And the church was established there. To such a degree that the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

And tonight we'll come to the last person. James. You know it seemed very strange that James should be one used by God to finalize the whole thing.

God had his strange way. Now who was James? This James was not one of the sons of David. You remember among the twelve apostles in the beginning? There were the two sons of David.

James and John. So this was not James the brother of John. The son of David.

Why? Because in Acts chapter 12 you'll find James was beheaded by Herod. Now who was this James? That we find in Acts chapter 15. He was the fleshly brother of our Lord Jesus.

You know in Matthew chapter 13 we are told Mary after she gave birth to Christ through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit she begat by the natural course many sons and daughters. And to our Lord Jesus Mary begat James Joseph Simon and Jude. Four more sons and several daughters.

So this James was a brother of our Lord Jesus according to him. Tradition tells us. Now we do not know exactly how true it is.

But we are told that this son of Joseph and Mary, James after he was born he became a Nazarite. You know what a Nazarite means? You know in Numbers chapter 6 if anyone wants to serve God he can set himself apart as a Nazarite. In other words one who is separated consecrated to serve the Lord.

And we are told by tradition that James from his childhood he was a Nazarite. He was set apart to serve God. He was a most righteous person.

He lived a very godly life. He was deeply rooted in Judaism. In the tradition of the fathers.

He prayed so much that tradition tells us his two knees began to develop like camel's knees. And he was such a righteous person. Even though he was not of the family of Aaron he was allowed to enter into the temple and pray.

He was the man admired by the Jews at his time. A most righteous person according to law. But then he was so deeply rooted in Judaism.

He was so brainwashed in the tradition of the fathers so he took the same position towards his brother in the flesh Jesus as the Pharisees and the scribes of his time. He did not believe in the Lord. He grew up with the Lord himself.

He must have seen everything about the Lord. He should be the first one to notice the uniqueness of this man of his brother. Certainly he should.

But strange to say he was blind. On the one hand he might notice in the life of his brother something unique unearthly and yet on the other hand because he was so deeply trained in Judaism he could have but take that position looking at his brother as an imposter. During the life of our Lord Jesus there was no indication that he believed in the Lord Jesus.

On the contrary in the gospel according to John chapter seven you'll find one day the brothers of our Lord Jesus spoke to him and said if you want to be famous to be known by people don't hide yourself here in the hidden country of look what you did call the people up and show yourself to them and the Lord said it is always convenient for you to go but my time is not yet. Now who were these brothers that mocked our Lord Jesus in such a way? Actually they ridiculed him, you know. They mocked him.

They didn't believe him. Certainly James was one of them. We had absolutely no proof that during the lifetime of our Lord Jesus James ever believed.

No proof at all. But strange to think at the death of our Lord Jesus after his death it seemed as if something happened. James who throughout the life of our Lord Jesus failed to believe in him and yet at his death after his death something changed.

We do not know if James was at Calvary when our Lord Jesus was crucified. We don't know. But one thing we can say he must have heard what happened.

He must have heard of it. And at the same time he must have heard that the veil that separated the holiest of all from the holy place at the death of the Lord Jesus the veil was wrenched from top to bottom into two. He must have heard of that.

And probably the death of the Lord Jesus in such a manner sealed his conviction that was buried by tradition all these years. Such a righteous person could not but have noticed the life of the Lord Jesus. Could not but be touched by the life of our Lord Jesus.

There must be some conviction going on in that man. But because he was so deeply grounded in tradition he couldn't get away from it. He was bound but the conviction was there.

And when he heard of the death of the Lord Jesus and when he heard of what happened in the temple as if God was saying to him this is the Messiah. This is the one. It is through him that the new and living way is open.

And probably the death of the Lord Jesus sealed that conviction in him and turned it. Maybe that was the very reason why after our Lord Jesus was resurrected he appeared in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. The Lord appeared to James not the brother of John.

James his brother in the flesh. The Lord purposely appeared to him alone. He needed it.

He must have wondered throughout his life he rejected his brother. He rejected the Lord. And now he knew his brother is the son of God the Christ.

And he is sincerely believing him but probably he wondered whether his brother will ever forgive him. Will ever accept him. He needed an assurance from the Lord.

The Lord knew. The Lord appeared to him. And since that time you'll find he was listed among the believers.

Because in Acts chapter 1 after the Lord was ascended those who have witnessed his ascension they came back to Jerusalem. Because the Lord said you go back to Jerusalem and there wait until you have received power from on high. Then you shall be my witness from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and to the end of this world.

So here you'll find these brothers and sisters they came back to Jerusalem and after ten days only a hundred and twenty were left. And a hundred and twenty people among these hundred and twenty people were the apostles, the mother of Jesus, Samuel and the brethren the brothers of our Lord Jesus. Not only James believed in the Lord but his other brothers came to the Lord too.

Probably through the influence of James. Eventually you'll find we have two books in the New Testament written by two brothers of our Lord in the flesh. The epistle of James and the epistle of Jude.

So here you'll find James was with the believers at the very beginning. And when they were baptized into one body, James was one of the members of the body of Christ. He was not listed among the twelve apostles.

Nevertheless, he was an apostle. Then the persecution began. You know when the persecution after Stephen was sown, then the persecution began.

And the disciples began to stutter but the apostles remained in Jerusalem. Now some people ask this question. Why was it that when the persecution came to the church in Jerusalem the disciples, they were stuttered and the apostles remained behind? Why? One reason was when the persecution began the target of the persecution was not the Hebrew Jews but the Hellenistic Jews.

You know the church in Jerusalem was composed of the Jews but of two kinds. The Hellenistic Jews and the Hebrew Jews. Stephen was a Hellenistic Jew.

The persecution was started by the synagogues of the Hellenistic Jews. So when the persecution first came upon the church in Jerusalem the objective was mainly upon the Hellenistic Jews. So when they were persecuted they went back home.

They stuttered and they went to the cities of Samaria and to Phoenicia and to Syria because that's where they came from. So they were stuttered but all the twelve apostles were Hebrew Jews. They were not the main target of persecution.

So they remained behind. And you know after the persecution and when the persecution began to increase Paul came in and he was this indiscriminate. He will go into Hebrew Jews and Hellenistic Jews equally and brought out men and women and put them to jail.

So the persecution began to increase. And brothers and sisters most likely during that period of persecution many Hellenistic Jewish believers they had gone out. So what remained must be the Hebrew Jews became the majority or even more than majority of those who remained in Jerusalem.

And during the period of persecution you need some people who are very firm, steady strong deeply rooted solid to stand and to lead. That's natural. Was Peter such a person? Peter changed to Eden.

During the time of persecution if Peter was the leading brother in the church in Jerusalem you can hardly think how can the church stand against the persecution. So naturally you'll find during the time of persecution it seems as if James the brother of Jesus began to be manifested as the leading brother in the church. On the day of Pentecost and during the first period Peter seemed to be the leading brother.

Of course there are other leaders but Peter seemed to be at the front leading. But at the persecution and after that you read the Bible you'll find it was James. Why? Because James was a solid brother very very solid.

Oh we need people like James. You know? We need people who are solid in Christ. We need people who have statues.

Spiritual statues. And we were told that James was not only loved by the believers in Jerusalem but he was admired by the Jews. He has such a good testimony.

And for a man with such a good testimony to the youth of God to lead the church in Jerusalem it could stand against the persecution. So probably that was one of the reasons why we find that James began to come to the front. Of course three brothers were pillars in the church in Jerusalem.

James John Paul and Peter. These three men were pillars to the church in Jerusalem. In other words through their strength the church was supported.

But of the three James seemed to become the leading man in the church. You see it was not a legal official appointment. It was a matter of life.

Of spiritual life. Peter at one time was ahead of the others therefore he was leading. But then you find James seemed to go ahead of Peter.

And naturally you find he began to lead. There was no argument. There was no strife.

It was just a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. And how you find because of that there was no conflict between this brother and that brother. It was the Lord.

It was the life. The spiritual life. James being a man with such a background even after he believed in the Lord Jesus he kept the law of Moses very strictly.

Because you know it was a transitory period. Transitional period. So on the one hand he still kept the law of Moses very strictly.

And on the other hand he was the leading brother in the church in Jerusalem. So you can see it was quite a mixture. Because most of the believers in Jerusalem were Jews.

And many of them with Pharisees background. Even priests. And some of the brothers in Jerusalem went out to Antioch.

And after they arrived at Antioch they began to teach. And said you must be circumcised. You must keep the law of Moses.

Otherwise you cannot be saved. Now these believers in Antioch were mostly Gentiles in origin. And yet these Jewish believers if we may use this.

These Jewish believers coming from Jerusalem began to teach and say no you have to be circumcised. Otherwise you are not saved. And because of that there was a commotion in the church in Antioch.

And there was much discussion. Paul and Barnabas said no this is not the truth of the gospel. And these few men insisted that this is it.

And they couldn't solve that question. So finally the church sent Paul and Barnabas with some other brothers to go to Jerusalem to see the apostles and the elders to solve this problem. Now before we go on we mentioned before that in Christ all the natural discrimination distinctions were eliminated.

There was, there is neither Jew. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision. Neither barbarians nor schisms.

Neither freeman nor barman. But Christ is all and in all. The Lord will bring Jews.

The Lord will bring Gentiles and make them one. How can the Jews and the Gentiles be made one? Because when the Lord brings them in through the cross the Jew is eliminated, the Gentile is eliminated, so when they come together they are no longer Jews nor Gentiles but they were one in Christ. And that is the truth.

The body of Christ. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision. The Jews were circumcised.

The Gentiles were not circumcised. But when they came into the body of Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision. Why? Because they were on the other side of the cross.

In resurrection there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision. It is the new creation. Neither barbarians nor schisms.

That is according to civilization. Some were considered as barbarians. Others were schisms.

Of course commentators have different opinions about schisms. Since some said the schisms were the most barbarians of the barbarians. And other people said the schisms were the most civilized people.

Now whether they are more barbarians or more civilized that is not a question. But the question is whether you are civilized or uncivilized. That is in the world.

God will bring in the civilized just as he will bring in the uncivilized. But when they come into the body of Christ neither civilized nor uncivilized. In the world you have social structures.

The barmen and the freemen. The masters and the servants. That's when they were brought into the body of Christ neither barmen nor freemen.

Because it is Christ. It is Christ. So we say that in the formation of the body of Christ they went through a lot of conflict on these sides.

The cultural differences. The racial differences. The educational differences.

The social differences. And you'll find the Holy Spirit has to break through all these distinctions. Eliminate them all.

And bring them together into the body of Christ. Brothers and sisters that is glorious. In the body of Christ there is no distinction.

Because it is Christ. That does not mean that there is uniformity. In other words, having no distinction does not mean that everyone is alike.

Why? Because it is the body of Christ. As the body is one there are many members. And look at the members of your body.

They are all there. If all the members of the body are alike you have a lump of meat. You do not have a body anymore.

Brothers and sisters, how easily it is for us to go from one extreme to another extreme. The one extreme is we bring all the distinctions in the world into the church. Into the body of Christ.

We bring our Jewish background, our Gentile background, our American ways and our Chinese ways and all these things into the body of Christ. And you begin to divide and divide the body of Christ along these natural lines. That is one extreme.

The other extreme is because all the distinctions were eliminated therefore we must be uniform. Everyone comes out just the same. That is another extreme.

Another extreme. And yet here you find these Jewish believers whether they are real believers or not I don't know because Paul called them false brothers in Galatians. Some false brothers came.

Whether these false brothers mean that they were not true believers or whether it means that they were true believers but they were in the false. I don't know. But here you find these brothers coming and said conform or out.

If you want to be saved if you want to be in the church you must be circumcised just like we are. You must keep the law of Moses just like we Jews are. Unless you do it exactly as we do and you believe exactly as we believe and you follow us completely you are out.

You are not even saved. Did you hear such voice today? To have no distinction is one thing. To allow differences is another.

There shall be no distinction in the body of Christ. And yet there should allow differences. We must be open to one another and tolerate there and for there.

Aside from the basics of the gospel that we have to believe otherwise we are not saved. Concerning the person and the work of our Lord Jesus we must allow differences of opinion. Why? Because there are differences of growth.

Some may feel they have to keep the day. Others feel that every day is the same. Some feel they cannot touch meat.

Others feel that they must eat meat. It is true. Those who say they must keep the day they are weak in their conscience.

But the strong is not to impose their conviction upon the weak. Rather it is the strong that should lure themselves to meet their brethren on their level and try to lift them. In other words, brothers and sisters on this matter of circumcision there is the difference of opinion.

These Jewish believers say you must be circumcised but the Gentiles said we don't need to be Jews in order to be Christians. Because the body of Christ is a new creation. It is not Judaism.

We don't need to join Judaism before we become Christians. There are differences of opinion in these secondaries. Circumcised or uncircumcised has nothing to do with salvation.

And yet they make it as a condition for salvation. For the sake of preserving the truth, the liberty of the gospel before grace, Paul and Barnabas will not do. Brothers and sisters, when God brings us together, thank God, there is the unity of the Spirit which we need to diligently keep in the bond of peace.

Why? Because we have one God, one Lord, one Spirit. And yet you cannot expect that when we start to come together, we have the same idea and the same opinion and the same interpretation and the same experience in everything. It cannot be.

It is bound that you have your experience of Christ. I have my experience of Christ. You have your understanding of the Bible.

I have my understanding of the Bible. You have some background. I have some background.

We have all the differences there. But remember, no distinction but differences. Distinction is eliminated but differences are permitted.

Do not try to impose your views upon your brothers and sisters. Do not try to make it a condition for salvation. Do not try to make people conform to you.

We are to be conformed to Christ. Not to you, not to me. We have to be open.

Openly discuss and fellowship. Nobody insists. We allow differences.

And if we tolerate each other and we love each other and we fellowship with each other, you know what happens? Suddenly you discover your opinion is gone. You discover your view is changed. Now who changes you? You don't even know.

And not only you think it that way, your brother thinks it the same way. But he knows he is not changed by you. He knows that.

And you know you are not changed by him. Now who changes? The Lord. The Lord.

Brothers and sisters, the wonderful thing is if we diligently keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace and just be open to one another, love one another, and fellowship with another, don't be afraid of differences of opinion. Don't be afraid of them. As we fellowship, as we share, gradually what you experience becomes my experience.

I begin to experience what you believe and understand. Gradually becomes my understanding. And that's what Ephesians chapter 4 says, until we all arise at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.

At the full growth, at the fullness of the sanctuary of Christ. Now that's Ephesians. So here you'll find in the growth of the body of Christ they came into this growing pain.

Oh, some people came in and insisted their opinion upon the brothers and sisters to bring them into bondage of the Lord because they were under bondage. So finally they went to Jerusalem. Why did they go to Jerusalem? Because Jerusalem was the mother church? Jerusalem was the headquarter? Not at all.

Not at all. We mentioned this morning that in the Bible you have only sister churches. You don't have parents church and children church.

You don't have that. Only sister churches. All the local churches are sisters to one another.

They went to Jerusalem because the trouble came upon them. That's the reason. If the trouble came from Samaria they would go to Samaria.

They could not solve the problem because these people came from Jerusalem. So they went to Jerusalem to solve that problem. Now brothers and sisters remember this.

These men came to Antioch without being saved by the church. They were not saved. They just came by themselves when they insisted that the Gentile believers must be circumcised in order to be saved.

Did James preach such gospel? Not at all. James kept the law of Moses very strictly himself. He was a very strict practical man.

And yet you never heard him say anyone a Gentile must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved. He never did that. You read the epistle of James.

Do you find in the epistle of James he insisted that they keep the law of Moses? And he was writing to the Jewish leaders. Oh of course Martin Luther you know. He said the epistle of James is a straw.

No he, Martin Luther used to fight you know. And he fought Catholicism with the letter to Stabilation. That was his thought.

But when he came to the epistle of James he said it was a straw. He could not do that. Brothers and sisters if you read carefully the epistle of James.

Even though James wrote the epistle to the Jewish believers scattered all over. Yet never in the epistle you'll find he commanded them to keep the law of Moses. He said keep the royal law.

The law of Moses. In other words it is not the letter it is the spirit of the law. The law of the spirit of life.

If you have faith you must prove your faith with your word. That's what James insisted. And you'll find he was perfectly faithful.

He had faith in the Lord Jesus and he lived of God. But never did James insisted or preached that the Gentile believers must keep the law. But evidently these false brothers probably because they thought James was a person who kept the law thought they began to use James as their champion.

They might even use the name of James. James said this. James said that.

You must be circumcised otherwise you are not saved. You know this often happens right? Even Martin Luther he never had the desire to form a party. He never had the desire.

But he was made the founder of a denomination. John Wesley never had the idea of forming another denomination. But his followers made him the founder of another denomination.

Brothers and sisters that's the tragedy. Many great men of God they had no desire to be party members. They had no desire to divide God's people.

But circumcised all them to be leaders of different. It often happens. Look at the church in Corinth.

There was the church in Corinth. Paul went there and brought it to God. Apollos went there.

Strengthened them in the word of God. Peter went there and further reinforced the church there. But the problem was the believers.

Some who were held by Paul and said we are of Paul. Other who were held by Apollo said we were for Apollo. And other who were held by Cephas said we belong to Cephas.

And here you find in the body of Christ in the church in Corinth. And then the fourth party came. You belong to Paul.

You belong to Peter. You belong to Apollo. We belong to Christ.

As if you don't belong to Christ. A spiritual party. Paul, Apollo, Peter.

They had absolutely no ambition to form a party. They went to Corinth to build the body of Christ, the church. They did not go to Corinth to build the Pauline church, the Apolline church, the Petrine church.

No. They went there to build the church of Christ. They built the church of God there.

The body of Christ. But you know, in the flesh there is always that thing of thank God. When Paul noticed that, you know what he did? He told Apollo you should never go to Corinth again.

No. He asked Apollo to go. He had no territory concept.

This is my territory. Don't come. Instead, he encouraged Apollo to go.

If you people want to exalt me, I will encourage Apollo to come. And see how Apollo reacted? Apollo said, I won't go. I won't go.

I do not want to seize upon this opportunity and your offer and try to make something out of it for myself. No, I'm not going. Brothers and sisters, what attitude these apostles have above humans.

Selfish, notice and ambitious. They are purely for the body of Christ. But you see many different things today.

If Paul tells, tell Apollo, you go Apollo first. Even if you don't ask me, I'm going. I'm going to take over.

I have my followers there now. But anyway, you'll find James had no desire at all to be a leader of absolutely no sense idea. It was these men that followed James.

They tried to use him as a banner because they were not great enough. You know, it often happened that way. So when they came to Jerusalem, Paul said he went there by revelation.

He was sent by the church, but at the same time he went there by revelation. Why? In order not only to keep the truth of the gospel, but to maintain the unity. Humanly, it was a test of strength between Paul and James.

Now, if these two men were to crash, you know what would happen? The church would be divided right along the line into two. And that would be the beginning of heresy in Christianity. But thank God, James rose above the situation.

Brothers and sisters, we have to give him credit. These men were supposed to support James, you know. And yet James would have nothing to do when they came to Jerusalem.

And they went along the way. Everywhere they went. And they reported of what the Lord had done.

All the churches rejoiced in the Lord. Why? They had no prejudice. They rejoiced in what the Lord had done.

But when they came to Jerusalem, yes, they were well welcomed by the apostles and the elders. Why the apostles? Because of the teaching there. Why the elders? Because these men came from Jerusalem, you see.

Not because Jerusalem was the headquarter of Christianity, the mother church. It was because here was the question of doctrine, of teaching. So the apostles must be involved.

And here was a matter of discipline. So the church in Jerusalem must be involved, represented by the elders. Now that was the reason.

So they came together, and you see how they came together and just throw the whole thing over for discussion. And afterwards the apostles and the elders met to decide upon them. Some of the sacrilegious stood up and said, they must be charged to keep the law of Moses and be circumcised.

And then Peter rose up. Oh thank God. He rose up and said, related how God used him in the beginning to open the door to the Gentiles.

And Peter went further and said, why should we put upon these Gentile believers the burden that we ourselves cannot bear? We are saved by the grace of Jesus Christ just as they are. In other words, not because we are Jews, not because we keep the law of Moses, therefore we are saved. We are saved just as the Gentiles.

The law and circumcision had nothing to do with it. It is the grace of God. So why should we put this yoke upon them? Thank God, Peter was delivered.

And then they listened to Paul and Barnabas relating what the Lord had done. But finally you'll find he gave his judgment. He gave his judgment.

He was the leader of them. His kingdom was good. But here you'll find he made his judgment not according to the flesh.

Why? He was a man who kept the law. He was an admiral. And here were these people supporting him as it were.

You, you, you are our leader. We are standing with you. And they stood up.

And you'll find he denied himself. And he used the word of God and said, this is what the law says. He was not afraid to displease his father.

You know many leaders, first they began to lead. And then they began to be put. You know, in the beginning they were leaders.

They lead the people. But finally you'll find they are not leading. They are being put by the Father.

It cannot stop. But here you'll find him who knew the Lord. Even though he himself kept the law of Moses strictly.

He said to the Gentiles, because in God's original design he has designed to bring in the Gentiles. Circumcision is for the Jews. For a purpose.

Thus the original purpose of God when he rebuilt the tabernacle of David all the nations shall be joined there. Therefore, the only thing we shall ask them to do is to abstain from the things of the idols, from fornication, from strangled things and from the blood. And you know these are not strictly the law of Moses.

These are the universal law of morals. You can trace that to the covenant of Noah. In other words, they did not put the Gentiles under the law.

But of course, being believers we are not above morals. That is true. So finally you'll find they wrote the letter and said the Holy Spirit and we, the Holy Spirit was able to be in charge of this decision.

And you know this decision was made. So brothers and sisters, here you'll find he who was a man of law and yet he had the grace to understand not to put the yoke of law upon others. He continued to keep the law because it was a tentatively sin.

And so finally God in his sovereignty destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. But even before that, James could see that you should not impose anything upon your brothers and sisters. Even if you keep it, you should not impose it.

And thus the unity of the body of Christ was preserved. So we say the formation of the body of Christ was finalized till then. Very strange.

Humanly speaking, he must be the opposite you know. And yet grace overcomes all human differences and rise above and embrace all. So we do thank God.

What is the body of Christ? The body of Christ, no decision able to embrace all differences and thus through fellowship we may arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Father. Oh Lord, do you allow us to see what the body of Christ is? What kind of a vessel it is? What is this new wine stream in which thou are able to pour in the new wine? Show us what kind of a body thou does desire to continue to be and to be. Oh Lord, deliver us from that which is earthly, that which is man.

Oh Lord, enable us to rise above all these and really be fitted together and minister one to another in love, that we may arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto the full grown man, the statue of the fullness of the Christ. May it be so, oh Lord. In the name of our Lord Jesus.

Amen.

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