

# Paul's Disagreements

by Steve Gallagher

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*The sermon explores Paul's disagreements with church leaders, highlighting the challenges of early Christianity and the importance of diverse leadership styles.*

**Duration:** 54:51

**Scripture:** Proverbs 15:1, Matthew 18:15, Acts 15:2, Acts 15:39, Galatians 2:11, Ephesians 4:2, Colossians 3:13, James 4:6

**Topics:** "Church Conflict", "Christian Humility"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the life of Paul, focusing on the conflicts and disagreements he faced within the early church. It highlights the importance of meekness, graciousness, and humility in handling disagreements, using examples from Paul's interactions with Judaizers, Peter, and Barnabas. The sermon emphasizes the need to prioritize the spirit we are in over the issues we argue about, and the significance of being willing to admit when we are wrong and seek forgiveness.

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## Transcript

Okay, the third message through the life of Paul, let's open with the word of prayer. Lord, I'm not going to pretend to be able to stand up here and talk about this man's life with any authority or any real knowledge, but I can ask you to guide everything that I say. Help me, Lord, to express things the way they were as much as possible.

Just guide my mind into truth, Lord, and help me through this talk this morning. I pray that you'd make it a blessing to Pure Life staff and to those who are watching by video. Thank you, Lord, in Jesus' name, amen.

Okay, we're going to be in Acts 15 and Galatians 2 this morning. The mother church in Jerusalem is now about 16 years old, and one of the main issues she has had to deal with has been how to extricate herself from Judaism and yet, at the same time, use the Jewish scriptures and their concepts, worship and follow the Jewish Messiah, live in the Jewish culture, and reach out to the Jewish people. So this was quite a challenge to be able to do this in the face of so much hostility that comes forth from the Jewish people in regards to the early church.

Then you throw this man, Paul, into the mix, and Paul is just nothing but a thorn in the flesh to these poor Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. I mean, he comes in and puts so much pressure on them, it's just

exacerbating the situation. And I don't mean to make it sound negative, a lot of it needed to happen, of course, but I'm just saying from their perspective, how much more difficult Paul tended to make things for them.

Well, by this point, the whole issue of what happened with Cornelius and Peter, that had been some 10 years or more before this now. This has been a while. And that all kind of got, they got through the struggle of that, and they kind of got on the other side of it and continued doing their thing, and that helped them to get a better side of where things were headed and so on.

But nothing could have prepared them for what was going to be thrown into the mix because of Paul's presence in the church. As far as Paul was concerned, he had no patience with those who wanted to keep the church in the quagmire of theosaical Judaism, with all its life-draining legalism and formalism and ritualism and all of it. He had no patience for that.

He would not bend an inch to the Judaizers who were causing so many problems. You know, when you've been to the third heavens, it's hard to be patient with people who are just adamant that things stay locked up in this little box of religion. And you know, he had seen things inexplicable and inexpressible by now.

So, you know, Paul, he's just Paul. Okay, so let's get into the story here in Acts 15. Let me just get started here.

Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. That's what they told the people there. And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren, meaning the leaders of that church, determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

All right, so I'm going to summarize some of this. I'm not going to read this all the way through, but basically Paul and Barnabas go to Jerusalem and it seems like they presented their case to maybe just the elders and the apostles who were there at first, and then later they had this big church-wide meeting or something. I'm not sure exactly how that worked out, but it does seem like something like that happened.

And Peter gets up in that meeting and he basically says, you know, we've already been through this ten years ago, why are we dealing with this again? You know, we know that the Lord wants to reach out to the Gentiles, so why are you trying to lay this law on these Gentile believers? And so he takes a stand and, you know, so on. I want to read this Paul's version found in Galatians 2, just a few verses here, just to kind of give a sense about how he saw things that he expressed later on. Galatians 2.1, then after an interval of 14 years, and I want to just stop here for one second real quick, because probably this 14 years is in Jewish dating, you know, that they would count any little part of a year as a year.

So, this could have been, for instance, November of 37 to January of 50, let's say, and they would count that as 14 years, although it's really just a little over 12. So, don't get hung up on the 14 years, because if you start looking at the timeline, something is definitely off. So, I'm not, you know, saying that this isn't 14 years, but I'm saying it might not be.

But anyway, then after an interval of 14 years, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. It was because of a revelation that I went up, and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles. But I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be

running, or had run, in vain.

But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a freak, was compelled to be circumcised. But it was because of the false brethren, and he calls these Judaizers false brethren. So, these are not Christians, you know, and he sees them for what they are.

They're unconverted, unsaved men who are in the church. Okay, but it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, and I think he's referring to their church in Antioch, in order to bring us into bondage. But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.

All right, I'll just leave that there. So, that's kind of Paul's take on what happened there. And, you know, so I think that what happens is after the big debate in front of the whole church, I think the elders probably got together and discussed it some more and then brought everyone back in, something like that, because I don't think that it happens in the flow of this.

There's just so much Luke has to leave out to keep a concise story line, you know, moving along. But anyway, before I get into that, I want to interrupt and just say something about James and the elders, just to get this into the story. You know, Pentecost must have been 33 AD or right around there.

Could have been earlier, definitely not later, but may have been earlier. Anyway, the church is probably 16 years along here. And so, at Pentecost, it was just the Apostles.

Now, 16 years later, we're in a transition period, and you've got the Apostles and the elders. And depending on which spot you're looking at this, in one place it says the elders first and the Apostles second, and the other location, I don't know where they're at right now, but the other one is the opposite. So, there's a transition here of leadership.

And then in chapter 21, which happens some eight or nine years later, then it's just the elders that Paul meets with. So, this transition period is going on here over this 20-year period, or whatever it is, where the leadership is changing in the mother church, which is, you know, a big part of the church at large. All right, and the other thing I want to do is just read this account left to us by a man named Hegesippus, who was an ancient historian.

And he talked quite a bit about James. He said that he was an ascetic, and he had taken the Nazarite vow when he was very young. So, let me just read this quote.

He drank neither wine nor fermented liquors, and abstained from animal food. A razor never came upon his head. He never anointed with oil, and never used the bath.

Yikes. He was in the habit of entering the temple alone, and was often found upon his bended knees and interceding for the forgiveness of the people, so that his knees became as hard as camels, in consequence of his habitual supplication and kneeling before God. And indeed, on account of his exceeding great piety, he was called James the Just.

And apparently, he was highly respected, not just by the Christian Jewish believers there in Jerusalem, but even the non-believing Jews respected him. Of course, later on, I don't know if we'll mention this somewhere along the line, but later on, tradition said that they killed him there near the temple. All right, let's pick up our story again.

Verse 19, Acts 15, 19. So, James brings forth this verdict, and again, like I said, I'm pretty sure he probably met with the other elders privately before they did this, because I don't think he would just, on a whim, by himself, impulsively lay this out. I think they probably really hashed it out alone.

But this is what he said. Therefore, it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood. For Moses, from ancient generations, has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.

Now, what he's referring to in this verse 21, he's basically giving the reason why he's laying out these demands. Now, fornication is obvious. That is just downright sin.

But the other three things have more to do with Jewish dietary laws. And, in other words, what he's saying is, look, Paul, you're going to be out there preaching in all these Roman cities across the empire, and in every one of those cities, there's going to be Jewish congregations, and they're going to be watching you and watching these Gentiles. Don't cause them to stumble unnecessarily.

Don't let your people get involved in things that are going to unnecessarily cause division between them and the Jews. You know, and one of the problems was that in those days, the best way to get a good deal on meat was to go to the Agora, the marketplace of whatever city you're in, and you go in there and there would be meat that had been offered up to idols. In other words, they probably did some sacrifice in front of the Zeus, you know, altar, and then they would take that meat and sell it in the marketplace and you'd get a better deal on it.

It was no big deal. You know, that's why Paul would later tell the Corinthians, it's no big deal if you eat it. You know, James is saying it from the standpoint of, don't cause your Jewish brothers or the Jews in your city to stumble over what you're doing unnecessarily.

Okay, so that's most of what this is about, these four things. So when James gives his verdict here, this carries a lot of weight. In fact, I would say that as far as the Jewish believers there in Jerusalem, James probably had more sway and influence even than Peter.

I mean, the two of them, definitely, but you know, Peter, there's still some questions about Peter, like with the Cornelius thing, but for James, the just, to stand up and say, this is how we're going to deal with this. This is how we're going to handle this. That had to really just cut the argument right out from under the Judaizers, at least for the time.

So let's pick up the story again, verse 30. They did this letter, they sent it out with two of the elders. So here in verse 30, so when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter.

When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. After they had spent time there, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out.

But it seemed good to Silas to remain there, but Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also the word of the Lord. So there's a big time period here. I say big, definitely at least a number of months goes by, okay? And just back to life, you know, as they had been living it.

Now let's go back to Galatians 2, and I want to get into the second disagreement that Paul has, this time with Peter. Look here at Galatians 2, 11, actually Peter and Barnabas and some of the other Jewish believers that were there in Antioch. But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned.

For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. All right, so Peter's sinful fear of man was causing him to align himself with the early church's worst heresy.

You know, and I think the way that it happened was some amount of time went by after this big council meeting in Jerusalem, and then these Judaizers, they're just, you know, talking together. And, you know, when rebels get together and they start talking, it's pretty soon it gets all whipped up again, and they probably went back to Antioch again and started quietly causing problems. And, you know, Peter was up there, probably visiting or whatever, and he's just enjoying the fellowship with the Gentiles.

But these guys get there and all of a sudden he feels this pressure. You know, I'm a Jew and I'm supposed to be separate from these Gentiles, and so he breaks away from them. And this is really upsetting to Paul, because he's fighting for something, and what Peter is doing is just obvious.

Not just Peter, but Barnabas too, who had been in the battle with Paul, fighting against these Judaizers. Anyway, let's read a couple more verses here. 13, the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, if you being a Jew live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews? You know, so he confronts him right in front of everybody. All right, now, was that the right thing to do or what? You know, should he have taken him aside? It could be that he did. You know, we don't know all the details.

So again, I don't want to too strongly criticize Paul, but I will say that in Matthew 18, Jesus lays out a very simple formula about how to deal with people who have offended you or causing problems or whatever. Go to them in private, and if they still don't respond, go to them with a witness or two, and if they still don't respond, then deal with it publicly. All right, so I will say this, that because Peter did what he did publicly out in front of everyone, it had to be dealt with in front of everyone.

But if it would have been me in that kind of a situation, and I've been in plenty of them, some, you know, like that in one form or another, you go to the person in private, and if they respond and if they repent, then they come forward themselves, and they, you know, get before everyone and say, listen, I've got to publicly repent about something I've been doing. You know, so if it's done in public, it's got to be dealt with in public. But, you know, as much as possible, we don't want to humiliate any of our brethren or whatever or hurt them unnecessarily.

So it's, you know, it would have been better if he would have taken Jesus's formula, I guess. But anyway, we don't know exactly what happened, but that's what he had to deal with. So he confronts Peter.

Peter repents immediately. I'm sure he did. You know, Peter, God bless him, he would just, you could see it in the Gospels, the way that he interacted with Jesus and so on.

He would just get out of whack and not be thinking right, which happens to all of us at one time or another. And, you know, he always had Jesus there to confront him. Well, who's going to confront Peter? Paul will.

He's the one you can count on. So he does confront him. And, you know, Peter, I am absolutely positive that he repented immediately.

So that was the second disagreement Paul had. Now let's get into the third one, starting here at verse 36. After some days, Paul said to Barnabas, let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaim the word of the Lord and see how they are.

Barnabas wanted to take John called Mark along with them also, but Paul kept insisting. So this went on for some amount of time, this argument or disagreement. Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia.

That's a very strong word, deserted them. That's how Paul saw it, or at least how Luke saw it, and had not gone on with them to the work. And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another.

And Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and left being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. All right.

What we have here are two completely different types of leaders. And this is one of the really, this is one of the strengths of having multiple leadership. When you have multiple leadership, like they had in Antioch, remember there were five leaders there.

I don't know how many elders there are in Jerusalem. We know that there was 12 apostles, but we don't know how many elders there were there. But multiple leadership, usually with one person who has the final say-so on things, is just the best possible way to run a Christian operation.

It just is. Because no one person can be trusted to always get things right. And there were many times when I ran Pure Life, and I surrounded myself with people who I did my best to make them feel comfortable in sharing how they really thought about things.

And there were a number of times that I had some wild idea that I was sure was from the Lord, and they said, no, we're not going to do that. And so I would back down and, you know, go along with the crowd. But there was a couple of times, too, where I knew it was the Lord.

And even though there were some around me that didn't agree, I still had to go forward. So I don't know what to tell you. You just got to find your balance in there somewhere.

But anyway, you have two different individuals here. Paul, who had this experience with Mark, he didn't feel like he could be trusted to go into that setting again. And he's looking at the overall picture, at the good of everyone involved.

That's what Paul's mindset is. He's a big picture sort of guy. And so he's looking at how could it affect those other leaders in these Galatian churches and so on.

If they see this guy that's with us, who's kind of being offered up as one of the leaders, that he just up and leaves. And so Paul just felt like, no, I really don't believe that Mark should go with us. Well, Barnabas, on the other hand, is one of those guys that had completely invested himself in this individual.

He sees the individual, he's not a big picture guy, he's a people person who focuses in on the needs of that person. So he is defending Mark, through this whole thing. And that's all he can see.

And the truth is the church needs both. I mean, we just do. There were times that we got into situations here at Pure Life, and I tended to always see things on the big picture.

And there were times maybe I was a little too quick to maybe send someone out of here or whatever. But there were also others in that multiple leadership who could see the person, the individual. And it was a good combination, you know, because you do need both.

I don't always see things right. No one person does. And so, you know, that's, again, the good thing about multiple leadership in that kind of a setting.

Anyway, let me just read what Walvoord said. Probably both Paul and Barnabas were right in their assessments of Mark. It may have been too soon for Mark to venture out with such a pro-Gentile apostle as Paul, but Barnabas certainly and correctly saw good raw material in his cousin Mark.

So, you know, I think that he's right, that he's looking at both sides of it. But the right or wrong in this disagreement, you know, you pretty much have to say that Paul was right and Barnabas was wrong. And what I mean by that is that the way it was handled, I don't know how Paul dealt with this disagreement.

In other words, the way he spoke to Barnabas, my guess is he probably was a little on the sharp-tongued side, especially when things got a little heated or when Barnabas stood his ground. My guess is that Paul probably came on a little stronger than he should have. Maybe he could have been a lot more gracious.

I don't know. That's just conjecture. But what I can look at in this story, there's three things I can look at and say pretty confidently that I think Paul was right.

First of all, it's just obvious that it was not the right thing to do. If one of the leaders is uncomfortable with one of the people going, then that settles it. You know what I mean? Let's say Jeff and I were going to travel somewhere and we made the mistake of taking Nate with us and Jeff insisted and I put my foot down and said, absolutely not.

Well, the thing to do would be to leave him out because if there's some disagreement there, you know, it's just the wisest course. Just that in and of itself should settle it. But not just that, but look at verses 39 and 40.

You notice how Barnabas, the way it's written, it's almost like he just up and leaves with Mark to go to Cyprus. Where if you look at verse 40, Paul and Silas are committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. In other words, it seems like Barnabas just leaves and Paul stays and prays with the other leaders of the church and they are sent forth.

So that says something to me. And like Martha Wing Robinson said, you know, who was right and who was wrong? She said, well, the Bible story continues on with Paul and Barnabas is out of the picture now. And I'll just say this, that beware of rising up against God's anointed.

Beware of it. We just had that happen with Jeff just a couple of months ago, right? One of the brothers that just started yelling at him, you know, beware of that because you think that it's just something that just blows over and well, you know, okay, we had a little disagreement, I blew it, you know, or something. But

that brother, as far as I know, never really repented of that.

And it seems like to me, and this is conjecture, Barnabas was a good brother. He was a good man. But I think a lot of it with Barnabas was that he was just a very good man by nature, you know, just a nice man.

I don't think that he had the spiritual strength anywhere near what Paul and the apostles had. But I think that what happened is he probably held resentment towards Paul that continued on. And you never see him again.

Now, I know that the Lord would use him in Cyprus, him and Mark, but I have a feeling that his days of usefulness were pretty much over now. When he withstood Paul like this, I'm telling you, there is just something you do to yourself. You don't just rise up against God's anointed like that and think that you're just going to go on with life.

It doesn't happen that way. You are giving the enemy some kind of an avenue into your life and ministry. And, you know, you can always repent later and get things right to some degree, but there are consequences.

So just be aware of that, you know, just in a general sense with these kind of situations. All right. But this is the wonderful thing about the Lord.

He always has a way of bringing the best out of situations. You know, like Joseph said, what you meant for evil, God meant for good, you know, and that is the way the Lord is. He just, even when we make mistakes, if our hearts are right, he'll bring good out of it.

So it ends up that we have two teams now, and Barnabas and Mark go to Cyprus, and that's good. You know, it's kind of a small little ministry for them. Paul now goes forth on his second missionary journey.

Wow, what a journey this ends up being. We'll get into it next week, and a little bit here, but he is going forth to take the gospel message to Europe and, you know, so on. Tremendous field of opportunity lays before him.

And so, you know, the Lord knows how to bring the best out of it. So let me just say a word about Silas here. In fact, I'll just read what Walvoord said.

Paul's choice of Silas, whose Roman name was Silvanus, was a wise one. Number one, he was an official representative of the Jerusalem church in taking to Antioch the decree of the Jerusalem council. Number two, he was a Roman citizen.

Number three, he was a prophet. And number four, the church at Antioch knew him well. So both Paul and Silas were commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

So he just concisely wraps up why that was a good choice to take Silas with him. And I thought it was worth reading. So let's continue with the story with Paul and Silas.

Verse 41, and he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. So instead of going by ship now and going, you know, obviously they weren't going to Cyprus, but they could have taken a ship over to Tarsus or Cilicia or something. But they go by land and they go up around and from Syria up around into the regions up there of Cilicia and go around to different churches that were there.

All right, let's continue. Paul came also to Derbe. So now they finally make it up into the Galatian region and to Lystra.

And a disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. And he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. All right.

Now, what do we know about Timothy? Paul knew his grandmother and his mother, and at least his mother was a believer, but probably both of them were. He said that he, quote, he had a sincere faith. He had been taught the sacred writings from childhood.

Timothy probably was about 16, 17, the first time Paul came through and he was stoned and all that stuff. So he's probably 18 or 19 now, something along those lines. And in 2 Timothy 1, 6, Paul said to Timothy, and this is years later, for this reason, I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

And then referring to the same thing that happened in 1 Timothy 4, 14, he said, do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. So now this presbytery was probably in Iconium, which was a bigger city. Remember Lystra was just a little town.

Iconium was a bigger city. The church there was probably much bigger. So they probably went to Iconium and had some kind of an ordination service for Timothy, laid hands on him.

And while they're laying hands on him, a tremendous word of knowledge, a word of prophecy comes forth from one of the brothers, may have been Paul even, and somehow spoke what his ministry gift was going to be. It could even be, I don't want to take this too far, but it could be that it was even spoken into him by the Lord through this person, whoever it was. Now, I just want to briefly say something about this.

It's just a crying shame what the Charismatics have done to ruin the whole idea of God speaking a word from one believer to another. Because, you know, there are Charismatics out there that are doing it in the flesh. In fact, I would, my guess is probably 95% of the so-called words that are spoken are in the flesh, and it has nothing to do with the Spirit of the Lord.

But I have witnessed God speaking a word through a vessel, and it is powerful. I mean, it just goes right through you when it's the Lord speaking. It is something to behold.

It is such a tremendous thing to see occur. And I believe that's what happened here with Timothy. All right, verse 3. Paul wanted this man to go with him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

All right, now, is Paul being flaky, or is he being a hypocrite here? Why is he circumcising this guy after all the strife with the Judaizers over this issue of circumcision? Why is he going along with it now? Well, let me just say that Paul didn't have a problem with circumcision with the Jews. That was not his issue. His issue with the Judaizers were they were insisting that it had to be done for salvation.

That's not what was behind this. Paul was just being wise because he knew that from here on, you know, going on, he would be going in synagogue after synagogue preaching to Jews. And this man's half Jewish, and it would just be better if he circumcised so the Jews in those cities, you know, it doesn't cause unnecessary problems.

It's kind of the same wisdom that James was using earlier. And so that's all that was behind this. All right, verse 4. Now, while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders.

Okay, so there's one of those places apostles mentioned first, who were in Jerusalem for them to observe. So the churches were being strengthened in the faith and were increasing in number daily. So this is one of Luke's summary statements, and that probably would have been the best place to end the chapter 15.

But anyway, that's where I'm going to end as far as that's concerned. I want to take a few minutes here and just talk about handling disagreements in the church. We see here in this story we've covered today three conflicts that have arisen in the early church.

And it's no surprise to me anyway that Paul is in the middle of every one of them. You know, he just was that kind of a guy, and there's not going to be any rest or peace when he was around, you know. So they always were looking to send him off on these journeys, I think.

But anyway, the first one, look at what's said in these passages about these three conflicts. His first conflict is with the Judaizers. It says in Acts 15.2, and when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, all right, and then in verse 7, and there had been much debate.

So that's one of the disagreements. Then in one with Peter in Galatians 2.11, but when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. And then Barnabas, and there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another.

So we see the same thing going on here, you know, in all three of these situations. I want to read something the biblical expositor said, which is just worth noting here. A close study of the Acts of the Apostles dispels at once the notion men would feign charity that the apostles and the early Christians lived just like angels without any trace of human passion or discord.

The apostles had their differences and misunderstandings very like our own. Hot tempers and subsequent coolnesses arose and produced evil results between men entrusted with the very highest offices and paved the way, as quarrels always do, for fresh disturbances at some future time. You know, so in other words, he's saying, listen, they have, they are men with a like nature as ours, you know, just because they had the Lord in a powerful way did not mean that they didn't have to deal with their natures.

And that is just a reality of the church. But this was written in the 1880s or something like that, and I think the church in London at that time was very strong. I would not begin to compare the church situation then to what we experience in the United States now, because the kinds of problems that we are having in the church today are shameful.

It's just shameful. You know, some of the um, strife and disagreements and conflicts that go on, not just amongst individual Christians, but denominations. And I mean, the church, it's just like the Corinthian church that was all divided all up, you know, people in this band against this group.

And I believe that I follow Cephas and I follow Paul and I follow Apollos, just this sign of overall general spiritual immaturity. So we have real issues today, but that does not release us from the obligation of doing our utmost to live in harmony with other believers. And I'll just mention a couple of things here that we need to incorporate into our lives in able to do this, to be able to do this properly.

Number one, I would say meekness. We need to walk in meekness. And I'll say it this way, knowing when to hold your ground and knowing when to let something go.

Because meekness is kind of like a two-edged sword. For instance, Moses was the meekest man on earth, but he didn't back down one inch when it came to the things of God with the people who rose up against him. You know what I mean? Meekness is not weakness.

It's not some pretty little Christian name that we apply to weak-willed, appeasing people. That's not what meekness is. Meekness is obeying God from a fear of the Lord and not backing down from the truth of the cross and of the gospel.

So there's a strength in meekness, but it's also in your dealings with other people, there is also the aspect of being willing to be compliant, willing to be pliable, willing to work with people and not be involved with unnecessary disagreements and so on. So this is one of the things that's needed today. Now, I hate to do this in a sense, because Barnabas was a good man.

I got to say that again. He was a good man full of the Holy Spirit. That's what Luke says about him earlier on.

But he is a perfect example of what not to do. He was weak when he should have been strong with the Judaizers. You know, in other words, he was more afraid of their perception of him than he was of standing up for God's gospel.

You know, he had more fear of man than God, put it that way. So when he should have been strong, he folded up. But when he should have been more compliant in the disagreement with Paul, who was obviously much further along spiritually than he was, in that setting, that called for, you know, being pliable and being humble and so on.

At that point, when he should have been more easygoing or whatever, he digs his heels in and refuses to budge and will not back down. You see what I'm saying? I don't mean to beat up on Barnabas, but I'm just trying to use his example here in Scripture to show us what this meekness should look like. The second thing that would help us all is to be very gracious in our dealings with each other as best as possible.

You know, we all have a nature, we all have our personalities and so on to deal with, but we should always be striving towards graciousness with other people. And I'll say it this way, knowing that the spirit that you're in is more important than the issue you're arguing about. And this has more to do with disagreements like Paul and Barnabas had, you know, not so much the bigger issues in regards to that.

But in other words, the spirit we are in is so important. How many people have we seen that had the truth, they were right, but their spirit was all wrong and completely ruined their witness? You know, I remember, well, Jeff and Rose certainly would remember Dan, I won't say his last name, he's passed away now. But Dan, who came to us many years ago, 15 years ago at least, or 20, was a guy who came up from Nashville, I think it was, and would get in these screaming matches with homosexuals and abortionists, be out there holding up these ridiculous placards and signs.

And in front of the camera, the local television station loved this guy because he was a Christian representing the church, and he'd be out there screaming at these people. You know, how much good do you think he did, the church, standing up for what's right? It's the spirit you're in that means so much. You know, and as Scripture says, love covers a multitude of sins.

When you're walking in the love of the Lord and disagreements come up, you know, there are just a lot of times that you just let things go. You know what, it's just better to just not get into the argument and just be gracious and smile at the person and, you know, nod your head and just don't get into it with them. I mean, I can give you a fresh illustration, it's not a great one, but a week or two ago we had to leave the office we had in Williamstown, meaning Kathy and me had a computer set up there, and we didn't even have a lease agreement or anything, so we could leave whenever.

We had paid them first and last month, so there was no debating that. But the landlady was very irate with me because she didn't want us to leave. You know, we're great tenants and we were, you know, is income coming in? And so she's arguing with me, trying to, I guess, convince me that we were making a horrible mistake in all of this.

Well, it's just, listen, we wouldn't have made the decision lightly. We knew it was the thing to do and, you know, so anyway, she's just kind of debating with me and I'm trying to graciously just talk with her and, you know, I just have to let her feel what she feels and just let go with that. There's just a time and a place that that's what you have to do, and it takes wisdom to know when to stand your ground and when to just let the other person win or think they're winning.

All right, and the other thing we need is humility, knowing how to say you're wrong. And I just wrote an article on the Eternal Weight website called Six Words That Can Change Your Destiny, I think it was, and I started off the article, I said something like, there are six words everyone loves to hear and hates to say. And I did that as kind of a tease to get people to read the article, but what are those six words? I am wrong, please forgive me.

I am wrong, please forgive me. We love it when people come up to us and say that, when there's been a disagreement, and we hate to say those words, you know, and man, you better get used to saying those six words. And I'll say this, that when you are accustomed to living your life with God in that mindset, Lord, I am wrong, and you are right, and wherever I'm wrong, please forgive me.

When you live your life with that mindset, instead of constantly justifying yourself and blame shifting and trying to get out from under responsibility for wrong behavior or sinful behavior, when you're accustomed to living your life that way with God, it becomes very natural to be that way with other people when there's some kind of an issue comes up. And the truth is, all of us, you know, we have natures, and sometimes we just say things that aren't right. In fact, Ed, I think I did something with you, like a week ago or something, I had to turn around and apologize to you, right? And Ed was very gracious about it and told me what a fool I was, but I'm joking.

But no, I did something, yeah, that's right, I interrupted you out there, and you know, it was out of whack, I shouldn't have done it. And so I realized it, and by the time I got home, I immediately texted him, I think, and apologized. But anyway, you know, you just have to be willing to say you're wrong.

And believe me, we're wrong a lot of the time. And it's better to just say you're wrong than to sit and argue with yourself and try to convince yourself you're not. So I'm going to close the session with a story, a personal story.

Some of you have heard before, but still, it's good to get it into this teaching. This story happened 15 years ago. And Jeff and I took a trip over to the Middle East and spent several weeks traveling around Israel and Jordan.

We preached, I don't know how many different churches, like a dozen different churches or something in Jordan, and traveled around Israel. And, you know, there were issues that came up traveling together. And I remember hearing this somewhere along the line, if you want to make an enemy, travel with them.

And that's basically what happened. During the course of these several weeks, we're both very strong-natured people, you know, and we would see things differently. He wanted to do this, I wanted to do that.

Or, you know, just little aggravations and irritations and slights or perceived slights happened. And by the time we got home, we weren't anywhere near each other. And then it just continued from there, like for, I don't know, a week or two, I think.

Something like, maybe not even that long. But anyway, one day, I don't remember exactly how it came about, but I knew we have got to close this thing out. We cannot continue like this.

So Kathy and I used to live over in TJ's house, and we invited Jeff and Rose over. And we sat down, the four of us, and Jeff and I both took a few minutes to voice what had happened from our perspective. And we both handled it, you know, we weren't vicious or trying to slam the other person.

We just, this is how what you did made me feel. And like, I shared my part, he shared his part, and we repented to each other. And all I remember was the four of us getting on our knees there on the living room floor, holding hands, and with tears, asking the Lord to forgive us, you know.

And you wonder why there is such strength in this ministry. It's things like that, that we have been able to handle things that come up with that kind of willingness to do violence to ourselves, if that's what's necessary for the greater good of everything. And, you know, there are many believers in this world who live their lives that way.

Unfortunately, I don't see a lot of that in the American church. There's just a lot of strife and arguing and couples, Christian couples, that fight, and there's just no humility between them, you know, no coming down, no willing to say, I'm wrong. And it's just shameful.

There's no excuse for it. So the Lord has given us examples, like what we have just read about here, how to handle things and the different things that Jesus taught us, that helps us to know how to go forward in this Christian life and do things right. Amen? And if we just will live by the way the Lord taught us, it will make life so much easier for us and especially for those around us.

So praise the Lord. That's it for this week. Next week, we will get into the second journey that Paul goes on.

God bless you.

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/mPC2Y8HDFPg.mp4>  
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