

The Apostle Paul – Lesson 16: Guidance for Doctrine

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Did we learn our lesson? Study Questions from lesson 15 (First Mission – Almost Home)

1. According to Acts 14:25, what do Paul and Barnabas do in Perga (that was not done before)?
Answer: Preach the word.
2. According to Acts 14:26, what was the status of the work of the first mission trip?
Answer: Fulfilled.
3. According to Acts 14:22, what two activities do Paul and Barnabas perform?
Answer: Confirm and exhort.
4. According to John 14:15, what demonstrates your love for Christ?
Answer: If ye love me, keep my commandments.
5. Complete the following scripture:
Titus 1:7 For a bishop must be **blameless**, as the **steward** of God

True / False

- False** The team departed from the same port they arrived in. (ACTS 14:26 Attalia)
True Paul and Barnabas were chosen by the Holy Spirit for the mission. (ACTS 13:2)
True Christ's earthly ministry concluded at His death. (JOHN 19:30)
True Believers have a responsibility to be unified under Christ. (PHIL 2:2)

Lesson 16: Guidance for Doctrine

We have our morals, convictions and values. When someone conflicts with our internal standards, we 'judge' them, and develop a mindset about that person. This comes to a decision point to **a)** address the issue directly, **b)** consider the conflict as a major character flaw and reject the person and avoid contact, or **c)** consider the conflict an insignificant issue, and overlook this trait, because you value the person more based on other traits.

Many people (among family, friends and colleagues) separate themselves due to "irreconcilable differences", when often, these differences may be trivial and possibly solvable through a loving approach.

We now see the early believers consider a major division in the concept of doctrinal truth, where the testimony of Paul and Barnabas are key to reconciling this difference of belief.

The conflict

Acts 15:1-2 – They are doing it wrong – No, they are not

(1) And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, *and said*, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

(2) When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

This is not an attack on the Gentiles because of their cultural differences, but because a core value of Judaism is challenged – Obedience to the law!

Genesis 17:10-11 – Specifically circumcision

(10) This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

(11) And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

- Circumcision was the method of demonstrating submission to God and inclusion to His covenant, which is the vehicle of escaping damnation.
- Circumcision also demonstrates a commitment to adherence to the law

Purpose of the law

Exodus 20:20 – Moses offers guidance to the Jews on the purpose of the law

And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

- The law was given by God to establish the requirements of man's righteousness – To reveal sin.
- The law is the standard of judgement to define acceptance by God

Galatians 3:24 – Paul clarifies the role of law as a method for education

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

- As God is perfect, and His standard is perfection (sinless), humanity cannot attain perfection until the knowledge of sin is revealed.

Genesis 3:5-7 – The beginning of the knowledge of sin

(5) For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

(6) And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *onewise*, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

(7) And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

- o Until the violation of God's commandment (GEN 2:17 – No knowledge of sin, blameless), there was no judgement imparted to humanity, there was no sin to judge – Creation was without sin, and there were no boundaries save the one. Humanity was created sinless.

Matthew 5:17 – Doctrinal truth

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

- The purpose of the Christ is not to void the law, but to complete the requirements of the law, that the person who places themselves under the righteousness of the perfect (sinless) Christ is blameless to the law, whereby the law is fulfilled with regard to that soul (God's grace is extended to that soul):

Romans 10:4 For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The law (through Moses), is no longer the requirement for perfection (being sinless).

The new law, as defined in the New Testament (the covenant with God) is submission to the Christ:

1 John 5:12 He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

The conflict continues – at a higher level

Acts 15:4-5 – They are doing it wrong – No, they are not (still)

(4) And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

- Paul and Barnabas confirm all the miracles God wrought among the Gentiles, signifying God honored their belief without submitting to the law.

(5) But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses.

- The Pharisees are believers with regard to Christ - His claim as the Son of God and Savior.
- However, they are still trapped in the belief that some level of righteousness is established by the behavior of the individual – specifically adherence to the law

James 2:18 – Behavior is important

Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

- This guidance is written to the Jew, but the premise is that ‘good works’ are a result of the faith of a righteous believer, not an act to establish righteousness.
- James is noting that evidence of ‘good works’ is an indicator of faith, not an establishment of faith.

Acts 15:6 – Decision time

And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

The Apostles (and elders) had the responsibility to establish doctrinal truth through the Holy Spirit

Today, the believer is provided with the Word of God in the living Bible, with a responsibility to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in understanding doctrinal truth:

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The decision is made

Acts 15:7-11 – Peter declares his testimony for the Gentile believers to resolve the conflict

(7) And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

(8) And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us;

(9) And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

- The only law applicable for righteousness is the belief in Jesus Christ – This fulfills all other law

(10) Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

- Attaining perfection through the law is not only impossible, but has become a burden too heavy to bear.

(11) But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

- Not only should the Gentiles be accepted on faith, but all who come to Christ should be accepted in the same Spirit (1 COR 12:13 - The Spirit of unity in Christ, not the law)

Paul and Barnabas bring testimony which is paramount in resolving a key doctrinal truth – The law as it applies to the believer. Without this truth, there would be constant conflict, as we judge each other in the name of God.

Next lesson, Second Mission (getting started).

Lesson 16: Guidance for Doctrine

Study Questions

1. According to Acts 15:1, what action do some believe to be necessary for salvation?

2. According to Genesis 17:11, what is the significance of this action?

3. According to Matthew 5:17, is the law of God (through Moses) still applicable today?

4. According to Acts 15:6, what group was responsible to make the final decision on this matter?

5. Complete the following scripture:

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one _____ are we all baptized into one _____.

True / False

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| T | F | The team departed from the same port they arrived in. |
| T | F | Humanity was created sinless. |
| T | F | Just as Adam had one law, there is only one law of judgement today (salvation). |
| T | F | All believers are the same to God, regardless of culture. |