

Acts 15 - How Antioch Handled Controversy Sunday PM 08/14/22

Introduction:

How you handle success and how you handle controversy are related. In some places growth causes problems. At Antioch there was false teaching which was causing some confusion among the saints. How did they solve their problem?

I) Have To Understand the Issue at Hand.

“And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

Acts 15:1

A) Teaching gentiles they must be circumcised in order to be saved.

1. We often speak of the “steps of salvation” which ends with being baptized into Christ.

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Galatians 3:27

- a. Not baptized into a denomination.
 - b. Not baptized into a local fellowship
 - c. Not baptized as an outward sign of an inward grace.
 - d. They were baptized into Christ.
2. In Christ is where all the spiritual blessings are.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, Ephesians 1:3

B) They wanted to incorporate the Law of Moses into the Law of Christ.

But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.” Acts 15:5

1. If they kept circumcision then they would of had have to keep all the Law of Moses.

And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. Galatians 5:3

2. They misapplied the purpose of circumcision.
 - a. It was a sign of being in a covenant relationship with God.

9 Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. 11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, 12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised. Romans 4:9-12

- b. Abraham was not made righteous by circumcision but by faith.

C) It should be noted that circumcision is not parallel to baptism.

1. One was already in a covenant relationship by being born a Jew, physical birth.
2. There were times when the Jews did not observe the commandment of circumcision.

7 Then Joshua circumcised their sons whom He raised up in their place; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way. Joshua 5:7

3. One is not a Christian by physical birth. Think Nicodemus in *John 3*.

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is

born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” John 3:3-4

4. One is born again by obedience to the word of God which tells us to baptized.

8 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38

- a. I cannot find a single time when a baptized person was told to be circumcised in order to be saved from the Day of Pentecost onward.
- b. I cannot find a single time when a person was saved and then baptized.

D) This issue was a widespread problem coming from the Jews.

Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.

3 So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. 4 And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them Acts 15:2-4

1. To solve a problem one must understand the issue.
 - a. Every time I have gone to a doctor, he or she has asked me what is going on.
 - b. You have to address the problem and not some other side issue.
2. The same goes spiritually speaking.
 - a. What is the issue at hand?

- b. What does the Bible say about this?
- c. Not a matter if I like it or not.

E) There will always be “issues” among brethren.

- 1. Church at Corinth had all kinds of scriptural problems.
- 2. So did five of the 7 churches of Asia in Revelation.
- 3. Even “sound congregations” occasionally have issues today

II) Some Things They Did Not Do - - Some Things They Did

A) They did not

- 1. Go to everybody else in Jerusalem. One must go to the source.
- 2. They did not get angry and slander the opposition. I have know situations where brethren have a disagreement and then go to the community or other brethren in order to slander them.
- 3. They did not ignore the issue or create a side issue.
 - a. I have found people often bring up a side issue when they have trouble with some thing I preached.
 - b. Addressing the side issue doesn't solve the real problem.

B) What they did...

- 1. They went to the source of the teaching.
- 2. They called the church together. Not a private matter but public teaching.
- 3. They discussed this in light of the scriptures.
- 4. What did Jesus do when asked a question?
 - a. Question of the resurrection.

But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, **32** I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac,

*and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."
Matthew 22:31-32*

b. *"Or have you not read in the law" Matthew 12:5a*

c. *⁴ And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female," Matthew 19:4*

III) What We Should Not Do and What We Should Do

A) Should not

1. Take a vote and the majority wins.
2. Have a brotherhood convention and develop a creed. I have heard this referred to as the Jerusalem convention many times. Many creed books will use this chapter to authorize a convention in order to determine their doctrine, .
3. Develop a new Hermeneutic so as to reinterpret the scriptures.

B) What we should do

1. Come together to discuss the issue dividing brethren.
2. Look to the Scriptures to solve the issue.
3. Then make up our minds to do what the Scriptures says.

Conclusion:

I have known people to have a physical issue and put off going to the doctor. It usually does not end well with additional pain and suffering. I have known brethren to have issues with each other and they wait for a long time. Time is wasted when it could have been used better. I have known people who put off obeying the Gospel and then speak of regretting doing so. I have never known a person who was glad they suffered longer than necessary, or a brother glad he waited to reconcile with a fellow Christian, or a person glad they waited to put on Christ. How we solve our problems determines our success and failures.