

# For The Sake Of The Church: Keep The Unity

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[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you for tuning into this message preached at Carish Church.! The Word of God is to be lived.! May you receive direction from this message that will be a lamp to your feet.

The scripture says that, Known to God from eternity are all his works. Therefore I judge that ye shall not trouble these from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, things from strangled and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath. Then he pleased the apostles and the elders of the whole church to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch and Paul and Barnabas, namely Judas, who was also named Bathabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

They wrote this letter to them, the apostles, the elders, and the brethren, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Greetings.

Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your soul, saying, you must be circumcised and keep the law, to whom we gave no such commandment.

[ 1 : 31 ] It seems good to us, being assembled with one accord, to have sent chosen men to you, with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have raised their own lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things, that ye abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.

If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell. So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch, and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement. Now Judas and Silas themselves, being prophets, also exalted and strengthened the brethren with many words.

And after they had stayed there for a little time, they were sent back with greetings from the brethren to the apostles. However, it seemed good to Silas to remain there. Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord with many others also.

[ 2 : 51 ] Then after some days, Paul said to Barnabas, let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.

Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

Then the contention became so sharp that it departed from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus.

But Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Amen. Let us pray. Father, we thank you for today. Thank you, Lord. You breathe a fresh breath over your word. We pray that, Father, our hearts are open, Lord, to receive of you.

[ 3 : 54 ] Teach us. Instruct us. Direct us. Empower us. Enable us. Pick us up of places of despair.

And set us up in our places of authority and influence. Serving you with joy, Lord. We ask the Lord this word that comes forth, it will accomplish the purpose for which you have sent it.

And Lord, it will not come back to you void, Lord. But it will do a new work in our lives and in our hearts. Thank you, Lord. Grant us utterance. Grant us right choice of words.

The Lord, all the glory will be yours. We give you all the praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Please take your seat. Hallelujah. Amen. Okay.

As we heard, there was a few issues. They had to go back to Jerusalem. And then the seniors in Jerusalem were able to help, with the help of the Holy Spirit, were able to address the matter. [ 4 : 52 ] And I think one of the key points was the fact that Peter gave a testimony of what the Holy Spirit had done. And then James, who seemingly at that point looks like, was the chair of the meeting and was probably the head of the church in Jerusalem.

Because I guess Peter and the others were always out there doing the mission work. So at base was James, who is the brother of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And he seemed to be chairing this meeting. And so he brought the reference of the prophet Amos, which was in the verse 16 and verse 17.

And so the word and the spirit working together for them to arrive at a good decision. And I pray that may God continue to help us to even work in this example, that we refer to the word, but also bend our ears to what the spirit of God will want of us.

But always the word has to have the final say in our lives, because it's the only check we have to make sure that we are actually in the will of God. And so this is exactly what they did. They give us this example.

[ 5 : 57 ] And so from verse eight, in which we read from, it said, known to God from eternity are all his works. I mean, they were making this point. James was making this point on the basis that they couldn't have imagined that God would save Gentiles.

Even though the prophet Amos had prophesied, it didn't seem to be the prevalent thing in the Old Testament. If you look closely, you will see it. But most of us will know the stories of Abraham, Isaac, all these things, before we get to the revelation that Gentiles will be saved.

So it would have been quite common for them not to really envisage that this is actually part of God's plan and it's actually going to happen. And also as it is happening, it's unfolding right in their eyes.

It seemed that this is a mystery. And indeed, it was a mystery because this is something that God had wrapped away from man, from the foundations of the earth. How man will be saved is a unique thing, is a unique mystery that the Lord had prevented man from having a full understanding of, even though he was consistently using his prophets to prophesy.

We see in Isaiah that he's known as the Messianic prophet. He prophesied about the coming of the Messiah. But I guess it's almost like you're so caught up in your world that it wasn't possible for them to really know how it was going to pan out.

[ 7 : 11 ] So James recognizes the fact that run on to God are all his ways from the foundations of the earth. So God knew from the beginning, but they didn't really understand how it was going to be. They probably were not even so much aware of the coming of the Messiah was going to bring the Gentiles into the household of God as well.

And this really tells us about the sovereignty of God. Recently, God was teaching us about the sovereignty of God. And let me take the opportunity to just retrace the fact that God is sovereign. God is in charge.

He rules in the affairs of men. God is sovereign. At creation, Genesis chapter 1, verse 1, who was there? None of us was there. But today we enjoy all the benefits of creation.

The sun is shining. The moon is bright. The rain is bright. The trees, everything is working. Just as it was said in Genesis chapter 1, God saw it, he did it, and he said it was good. And indeed, it is good. But none of us was there.

That is at play the sovereignty of God. In today's world, man is made to feel like we are in charge. But in all honesty, let me remind somebody that the Lord is supreme. He reigns supreme, and he's in charge of this world.

[ 8 : 18 ] In the name of Jesus, he is in charge of your life. In Psalm 115, verse 3, it says, but our God is in heaven, and he does whatever pleases him. Oh, yes. Psalm 115, verse 3.

Our God is in heaven, and he does whatever pleases him. What does it tell the average human being? You are on earth. How are you going to climb? What stairs are you going to climb to get to heaven?

They thought that when they get to moon, they will find God. They realize that it's one of the small creations of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. When he said in the beginning, let there be, all these things came to being.

God is supreme. In Isaiah chapter 45, verse 9, it says, woe to those who quarrel with your maker. Those who are nothing, but pot's head, among pot's heads on the ground.

I mean, you are nothing. You are just a pot's head, amongst pot's heads. It said, does the clay say to the potter, what are you making? Think about it.

[ 9 : 23 ] Can the clay say to the maker, the potter, you've slapped the clay on this wheel, you've poured water on it, and sometimes the way they slap it on, you can tell that it's really in control.

And it's telling us mankind, can you tell your maker, what are you doing? You may say it verbally, but that carries no power. The only power we have is the power that Christ has given us.

Deuteronomy chapter 29, verse 29 says, the secret things belong to the Lord, our God. There are things that are hidden, there are things that are secrets, and it says it belongs to God.

Some God, some of us have the privilege that by his spirit, we can access some of the secret things. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than yours, and my thoughts than yours. God is sovereign. What am I trying to say? I'm trying to say that there are aspects in your life that you would have to just trust God for.

[ 10 : 22 ] You cannot calculate all aspects of your life. That is why they just have to live by faith. Because of the sovereignty of God, if you align yourself, it's like you connect yourself to source, you can be guaranteed that your life is secured.

Because God has planned your days. He has planned, every day, he has planned your days. All aspects of it. God is never shocked at any behavior of ours. God is never shocked at the outcome of our lives, the choices we make.

He's not surprised. He's planned your days. He's given unto some 70, unto some 80, unto some 90, unto some 100. He's given those days, and it is appointed unto man once to die.

After that, he calls you back home. It is in his hands. It's in his hands. So we are grateful for every day. We are grateful. People of God must be grateful for every day.

We seem to sometimes look like the world. Because we can go about our day-to-day activity losing sight of God. And the fact that we woke up, and it's because of him.

[ 11 : 28 ] He woke you up. He just like, he tapped you. Time to wake up. Then you came back. Yes, it wasn't the alarm clock. It was only an instrument.

It was the Lord who gave you life again. And he's consistent in giving us life based on the number of days he's given us. And so if I was you, I would even walk even more closely to him.

Hold on tighter to the Lord. Because I am living life aware that he has numbered my days. I'm living life aware that I actually don't have the control that I think I have.

I don't. You see the way you fall asleep. It's like, you fell asleep. The next time you realize you are awake. That's the frailty of humanity.

That's how much we are not in control. The way you fall asleep. Some of you, when you are eating, you have a spoon in your hand. And then you fall asleep. These are good things to remind us that you are not in control as you think.

[ 12 : 35 ] And that for those of us who have the privilege of walking with God, of serving God, of knowing him, let us not take that for granted. But be intentional how we live our lives.

God is sovereign. He is in charge. We have to be intentional in walking by faith. Abraham is an example. Did not need God to be rich.

He was already rich. But oh, he needed God to have a child. He needed God to obtain the promise. And so in that aspect, there was no other way but to live by faith.

He needed to live by faith or else the promise would not be fulfilled. And as long as he did, the word of the Lord came to pass. Having an understanding of the sovereignty of God, you don't take prayer lightly.

A prayer is an evidence of your reliance on God. It's the evidence of your reliance on God. Prayer. It's the evidence of your reliance on God.

[ 13 : 38 ] Because guess what? You know the things that is so hard for you. You don't have to think about it. You don't have to be too tired to pray about it. You pray. You start praying. You don't even have to. You just, oh God, please have mercy.

You just start praying. But the things that you think you are okay with, you usually pack him aside. Yeah. So prayer, so look at the things you pray about is an evidence of your reliance on God.

How much of your life do you rely on God will be told in your prayer life? Have faith. If you understand the sovereignty of God, you must have faith. And there's something that Christians don't really like. Waiting. Waiting. patiently I wait on the Lord. Waiting. On the Lord. No waiting in vain. Waiting on the Lord. That yes, I know in your sovereignty you have an amazing plan for me. Said my thoughts are not yours. It is way higher. The plan I have for you is way higher, way better. [ 14 : 38 ] And so you are happy to wait if you're going to get the best from God. Wait on him. And so when James says, known unto God from eternity are all his works.

Indeed, they had seen how God had planned all this from the beginning and that now it was coming to pass. They were just opportune witnesses of God's plan and for all of us our lives is just going to be like that as we walk with him.

We will have the opportunity to see God unfolding his plan in our lives. That is the best life to live. I really encourage you. That's the best life to live. The life where you walk with God and you just watch him.

Because if you really see the hand of God you will know it's not because of anything you do or you have. And if there are things you can explain away in your life you really haven't experienced the hand of God.

God must take all of us to a place you know that when I look at myself from head to toe I don't deserve to be here. That's when you are walking in the best of God. I don't deserve. I don't deserve this. But I can see this has always been God's plan and is unfolding in my life.

[ 15 : 47 ] I hope I pray that we all enjoy aspects of God's plan unfolding in our lives in Jesus name. Amen. So now after this recognition he said I judge that we trouble not those who are from the Gentiles who are turning to God.

You can see a leader's heart he didn't want to burden from him he didn't want to burden he didn't want to make a weight or because Peter had previously said that we couldn't obey these things our fathers couldn't obey we couldn't obey when we were doing the 316 no I don't want I don't want 360 commandments to obey every single I don't I don't I don't want it's too much I don't remember all of them even the 10 commandments some of you don't remember come on 10 you don't remember how much more over 600 it's too much too many that's why we all need a savior hallelujah and thank God for saving us we are not bound any longer so he said let's not do this because truly they were not living like that but what was the focus the focus was these four things that the James brought up but he said we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols

Leviticus chapter 17 1 it tells us from the commandments that God gave to it said and God spoke to Moses saying speak to Aaron and to his sons and to all the children of Israel and say to them this is the thing which God has commanded saying whatever man of the house of Israel who kills an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp or who kills it outside the camp should not bring it indoors anyway it's okay it says the guilt of the bloodshed will be imputed on that man he has shed blood and the man okay I think it will be too long for us to read but the details of it God tells his people how not to eat meat polluted served to idols or polluted by idols this was a very common thing in the Gentile world very common thing in the Gentile world in that when they went and gave their sacrifices the meat was there normally the burning of the sacrifice was the fat and the blood the Bible says the life of a thing is in the blood so blood was normally used for the atonement for the cleansing for the taking away of whatever wrong they believed they had done and so the flesh was left that is why the even the Levites were free so the sons of

Eli Hophni and Phinehas used to enjoy the best part of the meat yes yeah I mean it was amazing there was so much available so much meat if you're a vegetarian I think it would be a bit tricky thing to be a Levite however for them I think they were not vegetarians at all they were let alone vegans so they really enjoyed the blessing of the Lord when they brought the meat so the meat was left they didn't necessarily so they sold the meat to the butchers the butchers would go and collect from the places where their sacrifices were pay of course the temple and then go and sell those in their butchery so that is how the Gentile world lived it was just something that was common to them and so they felt that this was very important because for the Jews God had told them not to eat things of that nature point number two it says sexual immorality are we trying to say that Paul and Barnabas were teaching them that they could do whatever they liked no sex outside marriage was always a prohibition Jesus had said it Paul and Barnabas couldn't say any other however however for the Gentile world there were practices that they would undertake that was contrary to so in

Leviticus chapter 18 verse 6 to 30 it talks about the different kinds of sexual relationship you couldn't be involved in and some of it was maybe you shouldn't see the nakedness of your father's wife yeah it did happen isn't it Reuben Reuben went and slept with his father Jacob's concubine Belha yes and then that's how he lost his birthright as a first son so it does happen even though God had told them there were different things don't sleep with your sister you can't marry your sister you can't marry your child all these things these were things that were being practiced generally in the

[ 20 : 30 ] Gentile world and so some of them may have come with this mindset that it is not sexual immorality outside the marriage so for instance if you're going to marry your sister in their eyes it was okay because there wasn't anything outside but then for them this is one of the key things they felt it was needed to address I mean these things happened Absalom slept with his father's concubines in oh yeah a lot of them 2 Samuel chapter 16 verse 22 put it up yeah broad daylight at the rooftop at the advice of Ahithophel who used to be the king's advisor open show yeah what was that for it was for a sign of authority yeah that he could go into the king's chamber collect his concubines and it was a sign of authority that the king has lost his authority okay so that also happened we also know of Abnom

Abnom also slept with his sister he so desired his sister that again he couldn't help himself eventually had to find a story I'm not well told the dad King David tell my sister come and attend to me and then eventually raped her these are strange stories in the bible you know when you look at the bible it should be very clean why are these things in the bible it tells us that God deals with all manner of people all manner of people God has dealt with so nothing surprises God so don't ever allow the devil to make you think that as for you you are so bad that you can't have acceptance with God it's not possible there's nothing if you look at the old testament the things that are there even Jacob went and slept one of his sons thing you know yes because the lady had disguised him but why an old man why are you out there looking for a woman what are you looking for after four wives what do you want again that you are gallivanting that you had the audacity to leave your staff with the woman and say

I leave this with you as usual or whatever I came I will come and pay you you leave evidence I mean are you okay exactly when you do these things for those of us you know those of you know you have advanced how many centuries down the line you know how to wipe even your internet footprints if only Jacob knew how to sort himself out he would have sorted himself out with no evidence may God find faith when he returns yes so these things were things that were happening even amongst the people of God we see that it was happening and so among the Gentiles there wasn't an issue at all you know and some of these people have been saved they've come into the faith so there are things that they probably need help with also things that were strangled holy holy 10 to 14, talks about the fact that God told them, when you kill an animal, you need to allow the blood to drain. And in God's wisdom, you know, when you kill an animal and it has some kind of disease in the flesh, you can see it. I'm sure you've bought some meat in some shoplis where you saw a growth or some things in it. You haven't seen them. So next time, watch them well.

There will be, you find some, you encounter some, but it does happen. It means the animal was probably diseased before he was killed, but probably looked okay. But then when it is the blood, how would you detect? Because there are sicknesses in blood as well, apart from the fact that the life of a thing is in the blood. So God instructed them, don't take the blood and also drain the blood from the flesh. And in those days, there were no exceptional medical equipment to detect diseases in the blood. So God said, don't even eat it at all. This is the wisdom of God. Whatever he does is perfect. Whatever he does is good. And so he had given them these instructions to make sure that they lived by. And so they saw faith that these were the four things they were going to tell the saints to stay away from. Things stay away, abstain from things that have been polluted by idols, which was a common thing. But for the Jewish Christians, you can imagine we're all in church.

We've brought, we've gone to care group. You brought the meat and somebody asked you, oh, where did you get the meat from? Oh, I went to from the idol butchery down the road. It is going to be a bit of a problem, isn't it? It's going to be a bit of a problem. And for sexual immorality, you can imagine a fellow Jew in the same church with you that you are marrying your sister. Why?

[ 25 : 38 ] What is wrong with you? Are you all right? Let alone marrying your child. I mean, what is wrong with you? But these were things, practices that were happening. And so they felt necessary. So was it that they were now reinstating some of the laws of Moses? Not necessarily so. But I

believe that they were trying to make sure that the unity in the church was maintained. Three of them is about food.

Yeah. So in Acts chapter 2, verse 42, the Bible talks about the apostles' doctrine. The Bible talks about fellowship. The Bible talks about breaking of bread. And the Bible talks about prayers. So that means that it was something that they treasured, that when we come together, eating was a part of their fellowship. The spiritual name is breaking of bread. But then for the sake of their unity, let's not offer things that will cause a problem to your brother. So really, they weren't reinstating the commandments of Moses. However, they were trying to ensure that the unity of the church was not broken, particularly when it came to the breaking of bread. 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 23 to 31. It talks about, okay, all things are lawful for me, but not all things are healthful. All things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. So it was lawful if you wanted to eat meat offered to idols. Because some people would say, who is an idol? That idol is every exist. I'm going to kick it. What meat? What did you offer to? You offer to air. What it is? It doesn't exist. It doesn't have power. It doesn't have anything. So somebody could have that approach. But the scripture is encouraging us. Later on, after this, this is how Paul also continues to help the church in its teachings. He said, all things are lawful for me, but not all things are healthful. All things are lawful, but not all things will edify. So what I'm doing, is it going to edify my brother? Consider. So now they were leaving. Yes, they had their liberty. They had the freedom. It's for freedom for which Christ has set us free. He who the son sets free is free indeed. So yes, they had the freedom to do whatever they wanted within the context of scripture. However, he was saying that, consider your brother. Will this edify your brother?

So even in our freedom, we put limitations on us for the sake of the other. Yeah. That's like when you're dancing and you're stepping on somebody's shoes, you can't say, whatever, I'm praising God.

[ 28 : 24 ] Just being a little bit mindful that you're praising God is hurting somebody's toe. You get me? So this is a very lame example, but it's just an example I'm saying that whatever you're doing in the name of the Lord, consider your brother. Consider your brother. Is it going to be an impediment in your brother's faith? Please watch that. All things, yes, are lawful, but not all things are healthful and not all things edify. So in conclusion, they realized that they had come into a place of unity by the help on the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. It goes further on to tell that it was the Holy Spirit who helped them. But they came to a place where they could say, actually, yes, we have a good middle ground. We have our liberty. You are not bound by it, but just consider your Jewish brethren. Amen. So they said that they were going to send some leading men. They said it pleased the apostles and the elders and the whole church to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch.

And this is the bit that really when I was looking at it, I was so excited. It said that chosen men to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely Judas, who was also Barsabbas and Silas, leading men amongst their brethren. These men were called chosen men. They were called leading men. Every congregation would have its chosen men and its leading men. I pray you become one in this congregation in Jesus' name.

But there was a bit that I took notice of was that this Judas, same as justice in Acts chapter 1, verse 23. You know, when they were about to replace Judas and then they had two, the scripture refers to as justice Barsabbas and Matthias. And the scripture says that, and the Lord fell on Matthias to replace Judas. So this man had been with them. You know the qualification people have been with them when they saw the Savior and all that. So Judas, justice, Barsabbas had been with them throughout. He'd been a faithful disciple. When he came to the point of picking somebody to replace Judas, the Lord fell on Matthias, meaning that this guy didn't get a, you know, he didn't get a job of being an apostle. But he remained faithful. Look at how many weeks, months, years down the line. They are looking for chosen men. They are looking for leading men in a congregation. It is not Matthias. It is the same Barsabbas. He has remained faithful even though he wasn't chosen. Even though the Lord didn't fall on him. Sometimes we don't understand the workings of God. We are too much in a, like, it has to be this way. But sometimes that is not God's plan for your life. That is not the will of God. That is not in sync with what God is doing.

But because of his faithfulness, he kept at it, continued to serve, continued to keep the church, continued to do all that. Over a season, he has become a chosen man. He has become a leading man.

In that same congregation, same Jerusalem, consistency, faithfulness was beginning to bear fruits. And now the apostles, the elders, were looking for people who they can send, people they can trust. Because this was a defining factor in the life of the church. A very young church, very young congregation. And now finally we are moving out of Jerusalem, just as Jesus promised.

[ 31 : 49 ] That is when the Spirit comes, you will go, Jerusalem, you go to Judea, you go to Samaria, you go to Artemis. So they have started experiencing the Artemis part of the promise. And now there's a division. It was key. How they would find a solution to this matter, would determine whether there will be a two-tier church. Church for the Jews and church for the Gentiles. Because they could clearly tell that as for salvation, it had been given to the Gentiles.

By the testimony of Peter. By the report of Barnabas and Paul. God was saving the Gentiles. But can we fellowship together? That was now the issue. Can we really fellowship together? How are we going to make sure that the church remains one? It was crucial. There will be no division. The congregation and the people of God remain one. And by God's grace, after all this deliberation, they needed trusted men to go and get their job done. And we see a faithful man. Somebody who has kept his bits, continued serving, and has grown over the years. And now the Bible further on describes him as a prophet. He's even entered the prophetic. It wasn't only a leading man, but he had the prophetic grace working on him.

It tells us that God rewards faithfulness. God rewards consistency. Your consistency will yield something good in the house of God and beyond. God sees your faithfulness. He's the rewarder of those who diligently seek him. God is faithful. Hallelujah. And so they chose leading men to go and issue the letter with Paul and Barnabas. I made a few observations about the letter. They recognized the order of God that was in place in the church. And so as we saw earlier on, James was the chair, no Peter. People would have felt like, ah, you know, Peter must be the main guy. But that wasn't the order in the church. That wasn't the order God had placed in the church. You know, so it doesn't necessarily come with such some, what you think it should be, but how God has ordained things.

And so when you don't become the environmental leader, don't be upset. Continue to serve the Lord wholeheartedly. It said the apostles and the elders and the brethren. There was a certain hierarchy here.

The Bible didn't mix it. It didn't say, oh, we brethren have sat down. It said apostles, it said elders, and it said brethren. The apostles in this time were those who had been with the Lord.

[ 34 : 35 ] So the 12, now including Matthias. So within, when they said the apostles in this part of the scripture, the only person who wasn't with the Lord physically was Paul. Apart from that no other person qualified to be an apostle. So it means that there were a few others there. Maybe Bartholomew was there. You know, there were a few others where they were not mentioned. But it said the apostles, that was the order. And the elders were people who were helping to, like the pastors, were there to make sure the congregation was doing well. That was the order. And then the brethren.

But within the brethren, our apostles, our elders, all of us are brethren. We see the hierarchy. So when God puts an order in place, don't say, what is it? What is it? Are we all God's children? Of course we're all God's children. Yes, we're all God's children. We all stand before God and give an account. But for the sake of the church, for the sake of the care of the people, we see in Acts chapter 6, initially it was the apostles. It came to a point, they said, they couldn't do all of it. So now they needed to bring new people in. People who have been faithful.

People who had a certain reputation. So let's bring them in so that they can help in serving the congregation. Not all of us can't come to Sunday and say, all of us will preach. Today, two minutes, two minutes, two minutes, two minutes, two minutes. We'll share. Everybody come and share your revelation.

It doesn't work. It doesn't work. Yes. Chaos, chaos. And so there's an order God puts for the running of the church. He describes Jesus as the head of the church, the head of the body. And we all have different parts in the body.

[ 36 : 18 ] And we are all described as the body of Christ. You know, so we all have different functions. Let us just be faithful in our areas that God has placed us. We also see warmth and broadness in the letter. He said to their brethren. So they recognized them, even though they were Gentiles.

Brethren, who are the Gentiles in Antioch, in Syria and Cilicia? He said that they called them brethren. So there was a certain warmth and the recognition of their salvation. The letter communicated that we recognized that your salvation is authentic and there are no questions about your salvation.

Even though some have come from this area to come say that you need to be circumcised in all manner of things. And that for you to be saved. We see you as brethren. We extend a hand of fellowship with you.

We extend brotherhood towards you. They also chose qualified men. They didn't just send anybody. Yes. For those of us who have desire, we need to qualify ourselves by our faithfulness, by how we conduct ourselves. God always has a list of qualifications. God doesn't just use anybody. Even though he can use anybody. He doesn't use anybody. When it comes to, if you desire the office of bishop, bishop, it's a good thing. Then he's not given a qualification. So he said that, yes, desire it. Oh, yes, you have desired a good thing. But then he's not given a qualification of why you qualify or you don't. When they were looking for ministers, deacons, they gave qualifications.

[ 37 : 46 ] You know, so even the pastor's wife, we have a few, said we should be hospitable. May God help us. And so, yes, we see recognition. And then above all, this other recognition was the recognition of Paul and Barnabas, their labors. The Bible says that men who have risked their lives.

So they were not just one of the many. They were men. They had separated them to qualify them uniquely that they had risked their lives. This thing that we are doing, it has costed them.

They've paid a unique price, a price that is above what many others have paid. We saw in Acts chapter 13, verse 50, how they conspired against Paul and Barnabas.

They had to run out of town. Acts chapter 14, verse 19, they literally stoned Paul to the extent that they thought he was dead. We just saw a few weeks ago. And they had, 2 Corinthians, yesterday's reading, verse 11, chapter 11, verse 26 downwards. It says, perils in journeys. Even if for nothing, perils, the journey, in those days, it wasn't safe. You didn't have a car to travel in.

They traveled by foot, generally. And you had bandits. You had robbers. It's in wilderness, where sometimes it's just you and your companion. That is why it's so sad that they had to part company like that. Because they had suffered together. They had risked their lives together, Paul and Barnabas. They had gone through a lot together.

[ 39 : 23 ] So they had to be qualified. It's okay when somebody goes over and above that the church recognizes them. The church holds them in high reputation, high value, because of how much they've given themselves for the benefit of the church, for the building of the church. Don't sit down and be jealous. We all know you. We all know members. We all contribute one way or the other.

Of course, we all contribute one way or the other. But I bet you, you can't compare your fingernail to your hat. Yes. When they say, choose your hat or your fingernail, which one will you choose?

We want to save two aspects of your body, your hat or your fingernail, which one will you choose?

Oh, please chop it. That nail. Me, myself, I'll clip it. Yes. But it's part of your body, is it not? You will even give your hair for your hat. People will give their legs. God forbid, it won't happen to any of us. But people, common sense will tell you that you are happy to give your leg for your hat. And so yes, we are all part of one body, but people play different functions.

And when people give themselves, they risk what others will hold dear, but they risk it. People of God, it's in scripture. It said, let's recognize them.

They made a point to recognize Paul and Barnabas. They said, these are men who have risked their lives. It's a very brief phrase, but it means a lot. It means a lot. They also went on to credit the solution they arrived at to the Holy Spirit. They said in verse 28, for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden. So first of all, they recognize that it's the Holy Spirit that has helped them to get to this amazing decision. And they worked with him. They were compliant with him. You can see that previously people spoke strongly about their points. I mean, they were so convinced that they had to travel to go and give this message that you have to be circumcised. You have to obey the law of Moses. But by this point, because of the workings of the Holy Spirit in individual hearts, by this point, they were all in unison. They were in unity. And they said, yes, we recognize that this is the work of the Holy Spirit. And they said that if you do this, you do well. You do well. You do well. You do well. He didn't say it saves you, but he said it's a good thing. Please consider what we are saying and do it. You do well. Farewell. I believe that this sends a very warm conclusion to the letter. Because it's really believed, I believe that they desired the

people to fill their hearts in their communication and also for them to receive the message that they had brought to them with grace. And so then it goes on. So when they had sent them off, they came to Antioch and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. When they had read it, they rejoiced at the encouragement. It goes on to emphasize that this is the work of the Holy Spirit. Because when they heard it, they rejoiced. They were happy. It brought encouragement. They didn't see it as an instruction, but it was actually an encouragement that, oh, this is what the apostles think of us. They see us as brethren. They addressed us as brethren. [ 42 : 45 ] Even that was enough to rejoice. They didn't lay upon us all these commandments, these laws. Oh, praise God. And probably they didn't understand the four things that they were told to adhere to.

And they saw the sense in it. This was a landmark decision. And it brought great encouragement to the church. Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets, also exalted and strengthened their brethren. This is, I took notice of this, that I have to believe God to walk with God. Because these ones have been around for a long time. That when you have the opportunity to be amongst people who are just beginning their faith, may I be a prophet? May I have the word of God in my mouth? I'm not saying to see things. I saw your shoe. No. But that's not what I'm trying to say as a prophet. But it said, also exalted them and strengthened the brethren with many words. So the words they spoke brought strength to the church, to the church, to the young church. I pray that wherever we find ourselves, when we meet new believers, a new group of people who have just found faith. Remember, James Hart was, they are now turning to God. Let's not burden them. And also, Silas and Barsabbas, also, we're able to build them up. Build them up. If you have been in the church a day longer than the next person sitting next to you, you should be able to build them up. You have received something they haven't received. Don't, you know, sometimes we think that you have to be preaching powerfully.

You have, sometimes, sometimes when I watch people, when they are preaching, it's like, how do they breathe? Like, in between. There's no breathing. I say, how do they process things? And it comes through their mouth. I wonder. Because I, look at me. But I know there's something God has given me, something small I've learned. When I pass it on, it will strengthen a believer. It will exalt a believer. Don't keep to yourself till the day you feel like you look so powerful. Today, that my time on the mic has come. I come to hear, you people, ring them, lift your hand. No, enough to strengthen. Enough to exalt. Build somebody. It might be one word of encouragement. It might be a sentence you give. It might be a scripture you quote. But it can build somebody.

[ 45 : 01 ] It's enough. There is enough power in it to be a blessing to somebody. Don't wait for the drama that comes with it. Just give it. Deliver it. Just give it. The power is in the word that you pass on.

When Peter was given his experience, he didn't finish preaching his message. The Holy Spirit just fell. He just fell. He didn't finish. And now I come to show everything. You know, he says, stand aside.

I'm doing my work. And then the other one who hasn't been on any missions, he's been at base, was able to quote Amos. He looks hidden, but he was able to quote, pull that scripture out and say, this is what is happening. Different strengths. Different strengths. But all, God is using all of it to build a church, to accomplish his purpose. Don't keep it to yourself. Share it.

And so they did this. And after a while, of course, Justice had finished his job. So he went back. But the Bible says that, however, it seemed good to Silas to remain there. So Silas decided to stay in Antioch, as Paul and Barnabas continued in their work, in teaching and preaching.

Gustavon, in his opening statement last week, he said, the church is built on the teachings and the preachings. And we must always teach. We must always preach the word of God in the church.

And so they continued doing this work. Then the Bible says that, verse 36, then after some days, Paul said to Barnabas, let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we preach the word of the Lord and see how they're doing. I always say this in meetings, that this is the evidence of follow-up. The follow-up works. Follow-up is biblical.

[ 46 : 45 ] Follow-up is scriptural. That when you sow the seed, it is good to go check whether the seed is growing well, whether it needs more watering. What does the seed need? He said, let's go and check.

You can see a heart for a man who has a heart for missions. Let's go. The church must be established. The people must be built. They need it. Whatever else can we give? Let's just go and see.

Sometimes you go and meet that their brethren are doing very well. It is an encouragement. Sometimes you go and meet that brethren need more help. You pass on, you pour out one more time.

But it's necessary to go and see. It's necessary to find out what is the state. So when in your department, you are discussing follow-up, now you cannot say that it's not of God. It is of God. If you are complaining or you are finding excuses, you are finding excuses against the word of God. I know. Exactly. The word catches everybody.

[ 47 : 46 ] Nobody exempted from it, but it's the word of God. So they went out. This was a good suggestion. This was a fantastic suggestion. Let's go and check. How are they doing?

They've indeed given their lives, but let's go check. If they're established, if they're well. And then it says, now Barnabas was determined to take with them.

John called Mark. But Paul insisted. That's the problem. Not that Paul had a problem. It's the determination and the insistence. That was the weather problem. There was no room for God to do anything.

There's no room for God to do anything. Previously, we have seen how others who were the Pharisees of the sect, they've gone and gone and taught something else.

They were able to sit down and have discussion, deliberation. Peter spoke. James spoke. Paul and Barnabas spoke. They all listened and they all came to one agreement. The point is, because at the end, they said, then the contention became so sharp.

[ 48 : 58 ] That is my problem. Determination and insistence. We could have had a place where we yielded, therefore we agreed. Yeah. It is the same determination and insistence that drove them from Antioch to go and seek solution in Jerusalem.

So you can tell that these two men were very insistent people and very determined people. Because without that, there would have been mess in the Gentile church. So we are not saying it's a bad thing.

But why must it lead to a sharp contention? Yeah, so we all have strengths. Some of us, our strength is very strong. But in that strength, the Holy Spirit must still be able to have his way. As a people, as we relate with one another, we may both be right. Which is usually not so. But in our eyes, we may both be right.

But can the Holy Spirit have his way? Can we come to a point where we say, we agree to disagree? And we move on in love? Is it every argument that you have to win?

[ 50 : 03 ] Is it every way? Even though you may know you are very right. But are you able to say that all things are lawful, but on this occasion, I just let it be.

I just let it be. And it's not every argument you have to win. Even though you are right. Yeah. For some of us, it's like your status symbol.

You win every argument. To the point that people ask you, why didn't you study law? Because you'd have been a very good... Yeah. You win every argument.

Sometimes you know you are wrong. But you have a way where you can twist hands and manipulate in order to win the argument. Usually, people just watch you and say, it's okay. Let it be. You are walking away thinking you've won, but they know you. It's the determination and the insistence.

[ 51 : 03 ] They didn't have to lead to a sharp contention. Yeah. And I think it shows in many of our relationships. Many of our relationships. You can be strong.

But it doesn't have to end up in a sharp contention. It doesn't have to. In our families, husband and wife, sharp contention.

I mean, sharp contention. Your mouth is sharp. When you fire one sentence, the person feels like, I need somebody to nurse me. Where is my mom?

I need somebody to lay my head. Because some of us, we women, because you are not strong, your mouth is very sharp. Yes.

It's so sharp that when you use that instrument, strong men become crippled. Because they can't believe what you've told them. The hurt and the pain.

[ 52 : 05 ] They have bought it for years. Because of sharp tongue. Yes. And some men today use it as manipulatory, like how to control. It's human.

It's the following nature. Don't allow it to grow and fester. And don't use it. Don't use it. Don't master in having a sharp tongue.

Some of us, we've mastered it. You just give it like that. People will go back. They'll go back in their place. They won't dare return.

Because their response, oh my God, they don't want it. It's okay. They give up. There are some of us who are like that. Yeah. So we need to know where we use our strength for the kingdom for good.

And we need to know where we lay it down. That's the spirit of meekness. Strength under control. Strength under control. That's meekness.

[ 53 : 04 ] It is not that you're not strong, but you can bring it under control. The spirit of meekness seemingly was lacking in this situation.

It got somebody fired. We treated this in Acts chapter 13. John Mark. The ministry of the helper. So you can refer to this on YouTube.

But John Mark got fired. He was fired from his job as a missionary. But the good thing about this is it didn't fire him from the will of God.

Yeah. It didn't. It didn't. No, at all his ways from the foundation of the earth. Yeah. I don't see any problem with any of them in terms of their reasoning.

I don't see any problem. Paul had a unique ministry. It required a level of raggedness. As we said in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 already yesterday, the sufferings were many.

[ 54 : 19 ] Not anybody can travel with him. Yeah, not anybody can travel with him. So it's okay if you're a John Mark. Yeah, it's okay. You are a house, you know, you are a house kid.

Some people go out, some people stay. Yeah. It's true. Yes. Some go out, some stay.

We need both. We need both. The church needs both. So yes, there's nothing wrong with being a John Mark. Absolutely nothing wrong. Just be faithful in it. Just do well in it.

There's nothing wrong. So he got fired, but he didn't get fired out of the will of God. It was the will of God for him to be a helper to Peter, a great help to Peter, helping him to write the book of Mark. It was the will of God for him to later on be a great help to the apostle Paul himself. He said, he's profitable for me, for the ministry.

[ 55 : 24 ] Bring him. So the same ministry, he had become profitable for the same apostle. I guess it was getting to the end of his journey. And therefore, he needed a certain kind of ministry.

Not those who would be up and down ragged. They were there. Even Timothy wasn't traveling that much with him. He started, but after a while he became a pastor. He settled. More titles.

You know, some people, they are ragged. It's true. You can tell, why did God make me this way? It is to use for, so that's no way, we need polishing.

We don't need complete change. Like, God uses all of it. Sometimes you have children and say, this one is too much. No, it's too much for this. It's not too much for her destiny. It's not too much for his destiny.

It just needs shaping. It just needs bending. It just needs, you know, helping. But don't kill it. You didn't make him. You didn't put their character, their personality in them.

[ 56 : 20 ] God will need it one day. God will need it one day. We need the strong and we need the meek. We need the strong and we need the soft ones. All of them, God is using to build his kingdom.

Don't try to change people. And so, Paul picked Silas. Silas is also referred to as Silvanus.

Yes. Yes. In Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 1. 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, he's referred to as Silvanus. So that's, yeah, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy.

That's Silas. And so Silas was recognized. Why did Paul pick him? He had seen him at the Jerusalem church in the Jerusalem council and the word of trust that had been given about him. the commendation had been given about him and he chose to stay. I believe it was all the workings of the Holy Spirit. Bathsabab went back but Silas chose to stay.

[ 57 : 26 ] So after this division, I believe that more grounds were conquered for the separation of Barnabas and Paul. Other grounds were covered if he had left to just the two of them remaining in one place.

So he was one of the leading men. So he was recognized as such. He was also, of course, called a prophet. We just read that in Acts chapter 16, verse 37, when they were put in prison.

It said that they were Roman citizens. I guess it makes a difference when you're walking through the Gentile world to be a Roman citizen. So we're looking at why Paul would have chosen Silas. First of all, he was a leading man. Secondly, he was a prophet. He had Roman citizenship. It's like, you know, when you have some kind of passports, it makes the journey easier. Yeah, so it was the same in those times.

When you were a Roman citizen, some other passports, you know what it is like. He spoke Greek, which was also needful for the work in the Gentile world. And of course, it was a great help eventually to Paul in writing some of the epistles.

[ 58 : 36 ] And also for Peter. Peter, in 1 Peter 5, verse 12, it says that he wrote the book of 1 Peter. So we see this, the beautiful workings of the Holy Spirit in the church.

A significant season had come in the life of the church and that by God's grace with the help of the Holy Spirit, they were able to come to a conclusion that brought unity to the church to avoid a two-tier church that today we all enjoy.

The scripture says when they heard this, they rejoiced. It was great news that we can all fellowship together as one body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that maintain the unity of the church and also the strength of the church.

And so we see, even though others are being moved, there's a lot of movement and shifting happening, arguments, making a case. But in all of it, we see the work of the Lord growing stronger, the unity of the church being established and the purposes of God being executed.

And I pray that may the Lord help us in this, our local congregation and also in this, our commission. God will help us that even in times of strong challenges and differences, may God help us by His Spirit to be able to know what is right, what is of Him, what is His will, and that we will all align ourselves accordingly.

[ 60 : 01 ] In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Hallelujah. Praise God. Okay.

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