

it comes to the Christian faith. This is the heart of Christianity. Help us learn and help us be motivated evermore to share the best news on the planet. And that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we pray this in his name. And God's people said, Amen. You can be seated. He's one of the most decorated and celebrated military leaders in American history, primarily because of his role in World War II. His name? General George S. Patton.

[5 : 38] Patton became famous for his leadership of the U.S. Third Army in France and Germany following the Normandy invasion. He's also known to be a very colorful personality, was known to be very hard-nosed, very aggressive, even sometimes controversial. And he really became kind of an American icon because of the 1970 film that won seven Academy Awards featuring George C. Scott. And in that movie, there's a very famous scene that really captures the essence of Patton and his personality and kind of the core of who he was. He just finished observing a battle, and he's now having a conversation with another soldier. And in that conversation, he ends it by revealing something really significant. Take a look.

That nightmare in the snow, the endless agonizing retreat from Moscow. How cold it was. He took the wounded and what was left of the supplies and threw in the carts. The polling was finished. Not any color left, not even the red of blood. Only the snow. Look at this cart.

I love it. God help me, I do love it so. I love it more than my life.

I love it. God help me, I do love it so. I love it more than my life. And in saying that, Patton wasn't talking about his love for freedom, though no one would dare question his sacrifice.

[7 : 51] He wasn't talking about his love for the flag, though certainly no one would question his patriotism. Patton was talking about his love for war. He loved the battlefield.

There was something about the fight, the sound of bullets flying, the smell of smoke filling the air. To quote another film, the smell of napalm in the morning.

When it came to war, there was something about it that he just loved, and he loved it more than his own life. And of course, that kind of mindset extends even beyond the context of war.

There are UFC fighters, for reasons that I can't comprehend, that love the fight. They love to be in the ring and to go at one another.

There are football players that absolutely love hitting somebody so hard, their grandchildren will feel it. They just love that. There's a thrill there.

[8 : 56] Or bullies at school, there's just something they love about pushing people around and messing with people. I'm wondering, Faith Family, if any of you know someone like that.

And I'm not just talking about actual war or actual fighting. I'm talking about, do you know anybody that loves the thrill of the fight?

Now, please don't point in these examples. How many of you have a friend that always, it doesn't matter what the issue is, they somehow turn it into an argument?

They just love to argue. Or maybe you have that kid or grandkid that must have the last word. Can I get an amen from any parents in the house?

Or maybe you've got that co-worker that you work with, and they are always trying to cause problems at work. I am going to be in my office if anybody needs me.

[9 : 56] Hoo-ha! Oh! Michael, wow! Sleep or hold. That's time for Bonzo. Come on. Oh, shh! Oh, you are the weakest link.

Oh! Or maybe you know that Christian who everything has to be a theological debate. Anybody know any Christians that love to fight?

Don't point, okay? Tom Rainer, actually, he was a researcher, and he did a poll. This has been quite some time ago. But these were actual things that churches fought over.

And I don't mean like they just had a little dispute or they had a little bit of a disagreement. Like they actually split. It was really a big fight over these issues. The first, I find funny, is the length of the pastor's beard.

Lord, help us if we fight about that here, all right? Here's another one. And I'm not making this up. Is it blasphemous, this is what the church fought over, is it blasphemous to bring deviled eggs to the church potluck?

[11 : 05] That's a real thing. Like, I guess you have to bring angel eggs instead. Like, deviled eggs aren't allowed. That was a real fight. Another one, like, real church fight was over Folgers versus

Starbucks.

That's not even a fight. Like, that's the easiest decision ever, and it ain't Folgers, all right? Here's another one. Whether they should use their extra land to build a playground for children or a cemetery for the old people.

I'm just going to tell you, if that church decided on the cemetery, that's where their church is headed because they are practically dead. Here's my point.

When it comes to the thrill of the fight, there are people, there are even Christians that love it so. There's just something about the battle that they love, and they have zero ability to discern between priority and preference.

And that is very dangerous. That was a great place for an amen. That is very... You know when I paused that long, I was waiting for something, all right?

[12:23] That is very dangerous. But listen, listen, listen, listen. There is another side to this issue that is equally as dangerous. Notice this on the screen. Just as there are Christians who love to fight about everything, there are also Christians who won't fight about anything.

They've got no passion. They've got no conviction. It's sugar and spice and everything nice, and can't we all just get along? Notice this on the screen, Faith Family. Sometimes the lack of controversy is just a fruit of having no conviction.

The reason why you always get along is because you don't believe in anything. And that's equally as dangerous when there is nothing so priority that matters enough that you won't draw a line and fight for.

If you don't believe in anything, it's going to be easy to stand for nothing. And so here's the question that I think Acts chapter 15 puts before us. It's the question I'm putting before you this evening, and it's this.

When is it right to fight? When is it right to fight? What is and isn't worth fighting over?

[13:44] Because that is exactly what Luke, inspired by the Spirit of God, gives us here in Acts 15. I want to show you, first of all, how I get this idea. That's why I set up the whole introduction this way.

The idea of fighting and battling and arguing, it's right here in the text. I didn't create the theme. Look, for instance, in verse 2. And after Paul and Barnabas had, say it with me, no small dissension and debate with them.

So you see that in verse 2. Now look at verse 7. And after there had been, say it, much debate. And look at verse 39.

Verse 39 in chapter 15. And there arose, say it, a sharp disagreement. And so, in other words, you see it's one of the ways in terms of coming up with what's the main point.

Because remember, the idea is never what you think the text says, but what does the text intend. It's not about what you think it means. It's what does it actually mean. And so sometimes if you just read it, you say, okay, in this chapter, this idea of dissension and debate and sharp disagreement, there is clearly conflict going down here.

[14:59] That's what Luke's trying to bring us in on. And the first conflict is this. It's a conflict over the message of the mission. A conflict over the message of the mission.

And it should come to no surprise to us. I mean, we've already seen how multiple times in the book of Acts already, there's no mission without persecution. Conflict is simply a part of being on mission with Jesus.

Last week, I hope you remember that sermon, how all the things that Paul and Barnabas went through, the personal opposition and the theological opposition and the relational opposition, all the conflict that they had to deal with.

But listen, not all conflict is the same. There's the long pause where you're supposed to say amen. Not all conflict is the same.

And therefore, all response to conflict is not to be the same. So let's look at this first one here in verse 1. What's the issue at stake? It says, But some men came down from Judea.

[16:05] So these are Jewish people that come down from Judea. And they are teaching the brothers, that is, they're teaching the Christians this, quote, unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.

It's on. I mean, it's put on the boxing gloves because it's time to go to war. A disagreement emerges here. And what's it over?

What's the issue? It's over circumcision, but specifically as it relates to Gentiles. And what we've already seen throughout the book of Acts is this. Hundreds and thousands of people are coming to faith in Jesus.

We're seeing that every chapter, everywhere we look, this mission is on the move. And nobody can stop it. God is building his church. He is redeeming his people.

And earlier in the book of Acts, it was mostly Jewish. Church, more rapidly in these chapters that we've just looked at, have been Gentile converts.

[17:12] For instance, last week we saw the proconsul named Sergius Paulus in chapter 13, verse 12. He comes to faith in Christ.

Then you have the preaching Christ in the synagogue of Pisidia. And they couldn't get enough. Let me refresh your memory here. Look at chapter 13 and verse 48. It says, When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord.

And as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And then in Iconium, which is in chapter 14, this happens.

Look at chapter 14, verse 1. Now at Iconium, they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way. And a great number of both Jews and Greeks, that is Gentiles, believed.

You got people that for hundreds of years have been outside the people of God, now coming to faith in God. It is amen.

[18:14] It is like, hallelujah, look at the work that God is doing. And I have seen this so many times in the Christian subculture that I grew up in.

And here's what inevitably happens. When there's somebody new that comes to faith in Jesus, we've got to make them like us.

We're going to teach them our language. And they're going to walk the way we walk. And they're going to dress the way we dress. And we're going to make sure that they bring their Bibles with them every single Sunday at church.

And you start conforming them rather than letting Jesus transform them. That'll preach. And so the Jews are like, wait, wait, wait.

We got all these Gentiles coming into this people of God. We're going to make them like us. And we're going to apply the same rules and traditions and standards on them that we hold.

[19:22] And do you know what's going down here? Do you know what's happening here? Here's what's happening here. It's another way the enemy tries to shut down the mission.

Think with me. He's already tried demonic forces, Elamus and Simon the magician. He's already tried hypocrisy in the church, Ananias and Sapphira.

He's already tried physical persecution, the stoning of Stephen, the stoning of Paul, though he didn't die from that. And so you have all these different ways.

I mean, it would be an amazing study thematically to study the book of Acts on all the different types of ways the enemy tries to shut it down. Because that's what's going down.

That's what's happening. So what's the strategy now? It's this. If we can't stop the movement, we'll pollute the message.

[20:17] It's probably a terrible illustration, but it just came to me today. It's like, if I can't keep the waiter from getting the food to the table, I'll just poison the food.

Like, I'm trying to, I tried stoning the waiter. But I can't shut this down. The people of God are still receiving the bread of God, the word of God, and they're eating.

And so if I can't keep the waiter from getting to the table, I'll pollute the food. So that what they're eating isn't the true word of God, isn't the true gospel of God, and therefore they won't be saved.

If it weren't so demonic, it'd be brilliant. And it's exactly what's going down here. And what is the response? Look at verse 2. Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension.

You better believe they didn't and debate with them. Paul and Barnabas had some of the others who were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. Look at verse 7. And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

[21:41] So what happens next is a debate erupts. It's like the first century version of the old Jerry Springer, which dates me, right? Remember when Jerry Springer was on TV and there's like pulling hair and throwing chairs and all that?

That's what's happening here. Remember, these Christians and these apostles are mad. They're not going to take this. And some of our, in our passivity, would say, well, can't we all just get along? I mean, can't we just get in a room and hold hands and, you know, roast a marshmallow and figure this out? And the answer is not when the gospel is at stake.

No, we can't just get along when the gospel is on the line because the gospel is everything. And without the gospel, you don't have Christianity.

The debate is not on the timing of the rapture. The debate is not whether certain spiritual gifts still exist today. The debate is not does Adam and Eve have a belly button.

[22 : 46] The issue, some of you are like, that's a really interesting question, right? No. You get this issue wrong, you gut Christianity.

You cannot, and thank God, these apostles did not compromise on the gospel. J.C. Ryle says it this way, unity and peace are delightful, but they are bought too dear if they are bought at the expense of truth.

Yes, we want to be united. Yes, we want to get along. Yes, we do not want to fight, but we can't back down when it comes to the gospel. So, the next thing that happens is a defense is given.

The gospel debate team, and what a powerful debate team it is, gets together, and they unleash an argument that would make Donald Trump speechless. I mean, that's how miraculous this is, right? And so, that's just a joke. Look what happens. This is their argument in chapter 15, verse 10. I'm sure I'll get an email for that. Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

[24 : 08] I love this. This is the rational argument. The rational argument goes this way. You couldn't be saved by the law. How do you think they can be saved by the law?

I mean, think, people. You're the very ones that the law was given to, and you couldn't even keep it. How do you expect the people to whom the law was not given to to be able to keep it?

It doesn't make any sense why you would put this yoke of slavery on them. That's the rational argument. Here's the next argument. We'll get verse 12. Verse 12.

And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Paul and Barnabas as they related what signs and wonders they had done through them among the Gentiles.

And you see a picture of this even earlier when Peter speaks. It's this. Okay, how do you explain what happened in Acts chapter 10 when the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit by faith?

[25 : 11] How do you explain what happened in Cyprus and Pamphylia and Iconium and Lystra and when Gentile after Gentile after Gentile received the same salvation we have?

How? Not by the works of the law, but by faith alone. I mean, there's the rational argument. There's the evidential argument.

Just look at all the Gentiles that have been saved apart from the law. And then thirdly, there's the biblical argument. It's in verse 15. And with the words of the prophets agreed, just as it was written, after this I will return and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen.

I will rebuild its ruins and I will restore it, that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord. And all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from old.

The biblical argument is simply this. The Bible told you this day was coming. The Bible in the Old Testament foreshadowed a day when the Gentiles would be brought in.

[26 : 18] And they would not be brought in through the law. They would be brought in by faith through calling on the Lord. That's a really good argument.

Are you with me? Biblically, biblically, the Bible says you can't be saved by the law. Evidentially, no one ever has been saved by the law. And rationally, if you couldn't be saved by the law, how would you expect someone else to be?

And then the conclusion, verse 11. But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus.

Just as they will. Oh, let's be clear on what this message is all about.

It is not about what you do. It is about what Jesus has done for you. It has and always will be about grace.

[27 : 24] And God's people said, Amen. Amen. So let there be no mistaking here that salvation is a work of grace that we receive through faith in Jesus Christ.

And that's what makes the good news the good news. I say it all the time. It's the best news on the planet. There is not another news, another gospel, that is good news like the gospel of Jesus

Christ.

Not in Judaism, not in Buddhism, not in moralism. Pick whatever ism you want. And it will fall short of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Namely, that you can't do enough, but God has done enough in sending Jesus in your place.

That's the good news. So a couple of applications, and then we're going to look at one other example of conflict and be done. Here's my question for you, faith family. And you know I'm a broken record.

You know when you show up on the weekends, you're going to get this one way or the other. And that is this. If the gospel is a message of grace, why are some of you still living under the law?

[28 : 33] Myself included. If we really believe this, and it's very clear from the text, that salvation is by the grace of Jesus and not our works, then why do we still live under the law?

Let me give you some practical ways that we do this. Some of you, myself, when I say you, I'm including me, I should just say y'all, which is what Jesus would say.

You live under the weight of hoping you'll be good enough. There are some of you here tonight, and you know that's not true, and you still live that way. You hope when it's all said and done, you will have done enough.

And even though I have taught you and myself every week that that is anti-gospel, your heart still defaults to that.

Or this, you live under the weight of performance, rather than realizing that his work is sufficient for you. Some of you, you live under the weight that God's acceptance is based on whether or not you had a good day or a bad day.

[29 : 33] You live under the weight because your sin, you feel like somehow needs to be repaid.

You know, maybe if I do these good deeds, that will even out the scorecard. It's why in the conversation with cousins on Thursday night at the Christmas party, I ask him, like, man, you're in a role where everybody loves you one moment and everybody hates you the next.

You throw that touchdown, and they think you're the best. You throw that interception, they want you on the bench. Like, how do you, in a culture that is built on performance, realize that your identity doesn't change with either.

Whether you throw the game-winning touchdown or 15 interceptions, and I hope that's not prophecy, all right? Whichever one it is, your identity before God, because of the grace of Jesus Christ, is unmoved.

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. So if we know this is about grace, why do we drift to law? Like in John Steinbach's book, *Travels with Charlie*, he talks about an experience where he's visiting a church in Vermont, and the preacher was preaching on sin and repentance, and this is what he writes, quote, It's so good, I use it a lot because it's worth it.

The service did my heart and soul some good. I mean, it had been a long time since I'd heard such an approach. It's our practice now, at least in the large cities, to find a more psychiatric priesthood that our sins aren't really all that bad, but accidents, you know, that were set in motion by forces beyond our control.

[31 : 06] There was no nonsense of that kind in this church. No, no, no, no. The minister, a man of iron with steel eyes and a delivery like a drill, opened up with prayer and reassured us that we were a very sorry lot.

He was right. We didn't amount to much to start with, and due to our own efforts, we'd been slipping ever since. He spoke of hell, not that mush-mush hell, the soft days, but a well-stoked, white-hot hell served by those who put their hearts into their work, and I began to feel good all over.

I mean, he put my sins into a new perspective. Whereas they had been small and forgotten, man, this minister gave them, that is my sins, some size and bloom.

And you're sitting there thinking, he gets it! He's got it! And then he says this, I felt so revived in my spirit that I put \$5 in the plate, shook hands warmly with the minister, and as many in the congregation as I could.

You were right there, ready to experience grace, and you went works. I felt such the weight of my sin, I paid it back and put \$5 in the plate.

[32 : 31] Why, when we know this is only of the grace of Jesus, do we still live under the law?

Here's the second application just quickly, and I won't say it's equally as important, but it's up there.

It's kind of like the love God and love others. It's the, you don't need to live under the law, are you listening? And you don't need to place others under the law. Here's what I mean.

The Jews, the Jewish Christians in Acts, are you listening, faith family? We're crushing! Crushing! Peter says, yoke of slavery.

You are crushing the Gentile Christians by taking them and putting them under the law. And there are some of us that do the same thing with others. There are some of you parents, and this is meant to convict in a good way that the Lord would redirect our parenting, but you crush your children because you make them feel like they're only loved when they live up to your standards. It might be a spouse that just feels worthless because he or she never feels like they're ever good enough. Some of you may have friends that feel really insecure around you because they just don't know where they stand.

[33 : 50] There can be lost people that refuse to walk into the doors of the church because they've assumed and concluded, sadly, rightly, many times, is that you're more concerned about their conformity than you are their transformation in the gospel.

And I referenced that earlier. Again, the tradition I grew up in was all about that. Man, somebody put their faith in Jesus, the next thing is to tell them how they would be a good Christian.

So go burn all your rock and roll tapes for Jesus. And I kind of think Jesus likes rock and roll, but that's a whole other sermon, all right? It was always works, works, external conformity, like let's get you in line.

And it's slavery. It's a yoke. It is a burden that will kill them. Faith family, notice it on the screen. Being on mission for Jesus means removing any, any, any barrier that would prevent people from experiencing the grace of Jesus. Say it again.

[35 : 01] Being on mission for Jesus means removing any barrier that would prevent people from experiencing the grace of Jesus. Why are you putting this on them when it's going to crush them?

And it would be wise for us to do that inventory in our relationships of whether or not it's performance-based, rules-based, or grace and gospel-based.

And I know what some of you are going to say. So you're saying that with grace means no rules at all? Of course not. James steps up, verse 19.

Therefore, my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols and from the sexual immorality and from what has been strangled and from blood.

In other words, he's saying this. Listen, we may not be under the law of Moses, but we are still under the law of Christ. This is the distinction we all must get. Are you listening? Obedience matters, but it does not matter in terms of your righteousness before God.

[36 : 22] Let me say that again. While obedience... I'm going to read it the way it's in my notes. While obedience doesn't save you, obedience is still important. It's not that works do not matter.

It's they cannot save. Are you with me? That's the distinction. So just when you think, oh, these apostles are like, go do whatever you want to do because it's just great.

No, no, no, no. James says, but you should abstain from idols. Right? There's still an obedience factor here that must be accounted for.

And then secondly, even though we are free by God's grace, we will sacrifice those freedoms for others. We don't want to be a stumbling block to the Gentiles or to those.

We are willing to flex for the mission of Jesus. So what do we learn from this first example? Don't worry, the second one's shorter. On matters of the gospel, Christians must be willing to fight.

[37 : 27] There you go. You got it, all right? You know, I only took 75, 80% of the message, but you got it, all right? When it comes to issues of the gospel, those first level essential priority things, not important but secondary, I mean all of Christianity rises and falls on these key doctrines.

On that we will fight. I will not budge. I will not bow. I will not turn the eye. We cannot compromise the gospel.

Amen? Here's the second conflict, and we'll hit it quickly, I promise. Watch what happens now in verse 36 between Christian brothers. And after some days, Paul said to Barnabas, hey, let's return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaim the word of the Lord and see how they are. That's pretty cool, right? Let's go back and catch up on everybody. And Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul thought it best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to do the work.

And there arose a sharp disagreement so that they separated from each other.

[38 : 53] And Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed to Cyprus. Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by their brothers to the grace of the Lord. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Wow. Now we have a conflict over the method of the mission. The beginning of Acts chapter 15, it is about what the gospel is. And now it's not about the gospel, it's about how we go about doing the mission.

And Paul and Barnabas have a sharp disagreement as to whether or not John Mark should be allowed to go with them. As the text says, and you remember from last week's sermon, play along, that he quit.

John Mark just went back home and gave up on the mission. And Paul does not see him fit to continue. And Barnabas thinks he should be given a second chance.

By the way, just for the record, Paul and John Mark will later reconcile, but that's down the line. In other words, now we have a conflict on how we think this mission should be done.

[40 : 00] Who should do it? How should we do it? How long? How often? In other words, it's not about the message, it's about the method. And what I think is so interesting here is a few things.

Notice this, number one, that this is conflict among the spiritually mature. These are very committed Christians. In other words, we ought not assume when we have conflict that it is necessarily a reflection of someone's spiritual immaturity.

It might be, but it ain't here. I mean, you're not going to find two more spiritually mature people than Paul and Barnabas. And yet, even the spiritually mature sometimes sharply disagree.

Amen? You ever been in church for very long? Number two, conflict occurs here among the doctrinally committed. Paul and Barnabas had just fought together for the gospel.

And so they believed the gospel together. They believed in this mission together. They just simply disagreed on how it should happen. Barnabas wants to take John Mark and Paul doesn't.

[41 : 11] And it's a real sharp disagreement, even among those who are doctrinally committed.

Number three, the conflict occurs among the missionally minded. Both of these men are completely committed to the mission of Christ.

Can we stop with kind of the passive aggressive comments that go like this? Well, because of this issue, whatever the issue is, well, they just don't care about this group anymore.

Listen, that's not the case at all. Both of these men care about the mission and care about the people. They just simply have different methods and different ways of doing it.

But just because somebody disagrees with you or does it a different way, doesn't mean they are any less committed to the mission of Christ than you are. Number four, conflict occurs between the relationally close.

These men have a history, and it is a beautiful history, of serving together, of being in the trenches together. They've been sent out together in Acts chapter 13.

[42 : 16] They have labored together. They've been hit with rocks together. They've been called names together. They've been run out of town together. They didn't know if they'd see the next day together.

And they still had a sharp disagreement. You see, not all conflict is the same, and therefore not all conflict can be handled the same.

These men, unlike in the first example, were, listen, we cannot continue in the mission until we get this right. Because there is no mission without the gospel.

In this situation, still a major conflict, but the decision is not, we're going to shut down the mission until we get this right. It's no, we're going to keep the mission going, but we'll do it in different ways. You take John Mark. I'm going to take Silas. And the mission will continue. This is really important for us faith.

[43 : 24] Like, this is a case study in assessing church conflict. Because I talk a lot about like triage. And the problem is, is when you think everything is a head wound and life threatening, or you think everything's a broken pinky toe and doesn't matter.

No offense to the pinky toe. Right? It's like, there's, there's no ability to discern this is priority, and that's preference. I mean, sure, I'd rather do it that way, but I don't have to.

And we can even sharply disagree. But it's not as important to me as the gospel. So, here's just a few quick, and I'm about to wrap it up.

Here's a few quick questions I would have you ask about when is it right to fight. Number one, what's the real nature of the conflict? What's the real nature of the conflict? And maybe you're too emotional to assess it, and you need other people to speak into it. But is it priority, or is it preference? And again, this is where I talk about triage, the head wound, or the broken arm, or the sprained ankle.

[44 : 32] Not every injury is the same, and must be treated differently. And here, the mature Christians, the mature Christians are able to say, this is about the gospel, and I won't back down.

This is about the method, and I'll flex. Most of my experience in churches for the last 25 years is people don't have the discernment to do that.

I disagree on this issue of whatever. Deviled eggs. I'm out. I'm done. Everything's a head wound to you.

If we want to keep this mission going, we have to learn when it's right to fight. And when it's okay, to go on, and to do it differently.

That might mean we don't do it together, like Paul and Barnabas, but we're still on mission. Are y'all with me? Number two, is there an important biblical principle at stake?

[45 : 42] That is, is there something clearly scriptural that's being violated, or is it just your tradition? Because honestly, a lot of the things that churches fight about don't have anything to do with what's actually in the Bible.

It's what they were raised to believe. It's what the tradition they grew up in taught them. It's just what they've always known. And so they walk in thinking it's gospel when it doesn't have anything to do with the gospel.

And so you've got to have, and I've got to have the discernment, the help of the Holy Spirit to be able to say, is this actually a violation of scripture? Or am I just going to make my mama mad? Because I'm going to a church that does it this way. Forget that stuff. Is this biblical? Number three, will the mission be furthered or hindered by this conflict?

So if we keep fighting about Folgers and Starbucks, or if we keep fighting about styles of music, or how we should, if we keep fighting about that, does that help our mission or hinder it?

[46 : 53] If the outside world walked in and heard that argument, what would they think about it? And they might not even think that arguing about the gospel was important, but you get the illustration I'm trying to make.

If they look at you and all you're really fighting about is whether or not you can bring deviled eggs to the potluck, most people are going to say, I don't want anything to do with that, and the mission gets hindered. But if they see people that are willing to say, you know what, we don't see this the same way, we don't agree, but it's not a gospel issue, there's no violation of scripture, and we're going to walk in love.

The world goes, I want that. Man, sign me up, because that ain't how my family operates. That ain't how the people I work with operate. In other words, you have to ask, if I keep acting this way, if I keep drawing this line, am I going to further the mission or hinder the mission?

Listen, drawing the line on the gospel earlier in Acts 15 furthered the mission, because there isn't a mission without the gospel. But being willing to part ways actually furthered the mission with Paul and Barnabas, because now instead of two, how many we got?

Tennessee math. Let me get my toes. Four. We went from two to four, and now we got more on mission, and God's going to use that to build his kingdom.

[48 : 18] Number four and last is, is the Lord trying to develop in me? What is the Lord trying to develop in me through this conflict? In Acts 15, the gospel is clarified, and the mission gets multiplied.

And so we have to ask, like, Lord, what are you growing in me through this disagreement, through this conflict, through this situation? But here's my prayer.

Listen to me. I'm done. We have to learn the lesson of Acts 15. We have to learn the lesson. The church of Jesus has got to learn the lesson of Acts 15.

Namely, don't be the kind of people who like to fight about everything. And don't be the kind of people who won't fight for anything. There are times in the mission you're going to have to stand your ground.

And there are times in the mission where you're going to have to disagree and move on. And the only way we'll be able to discern that and not hinder the mission of Christ is to remember this.

[49 : 23] Unlike Patton and many other people that we know, look at it on the screen. We do not love the fight of the mission.

We love the founder of the mission. My love is not in the conflict. My love is in Christ.

And when that's kept at the forefront, it will help me see things clearly. Because Jesus is the one that has already fought the ultimate fight.

He is the one that already won the war. And it is Him we love. And oh, how we love Him so. We love Him more than our life.

And God's people said, Amen. Pray with me. Wow. Lord, help us. Help us. Help us. Help your church learn the lesson of Acts 15.

[50 : 27] of knowing when it's right to fight. When it's right to stand up and say, I will not back down on this issue because there's just too much at stake.

And that actually advances the mission because we must be clear on how people are saved. If the whole mission is to bring people into the family of God and to see the redemptive work of Christ spread to the four corners of the earth, to the ends of the earth, if that's the mission, then we got to be clear on what salvation is.

But then, Lord, there are times that we just need to say, you know what? That's not how I would do it. It's not even how I like it to be done. I would certainly do it a different way.

But you know what? It's okay. Because my love isn't found in my preference. My love is found in my Savior. And this brother and this sister who sees it differently than I do loves Jesus too.

So, let this be a word for us at Faith Family. Lord, wherever you might even take this message online, I pray that there would be other believers that would learn the lesson of Acts 15 of knowing when it's right to fight.

[51 : 51] Thank you, Jesus, that you have already fought the ultimate fight and you have already won the ultimate victory. And we're going to celebrate that now in communion.

In Jesus' name. Amen.