

FIVE SMOOTH STONES

The Book Of Acts: When Christians Disagree

(Acts 15:36-41)

Introduction:

We Christians disagree a lot, sometimes about the craziest things. I don't know if you know it or not, but Christians have been disagreeing with each other since the very beginning. It goes all the way back to the days of the New Testament. When you read Romans and I Corinthians, you discover that Christians disagree on things like eating meat offered to idols, whether or not to observe the Sabbath Day, whether to eat meat or be a vegetarian, whether to drink wine, or whether you should not drink wine. In the centuries since then we can summarize the situation by saying that Christians have disagreed on every possible point on which you can disagree and still be a Christian. No matter what issue comes to mind, if you look around the world you'll find some Christians somewhere who disagree about it.

So what's a person to do? When you come to those areas where Christians disagree, how can you make up your mind about what's right and what's wrong for your life? How do you find God's will in areas where Christians often disagree? Well, let's turn to a scripture and learn from ...

An Ancient Quarrel

In order to help us answer that question, let's study the record of an ancient quarrel between two old friends in Acts 15:36-41.

“They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.” (Acts 15:39)

❖ **Principle #1: It is possible for Good and Godly Disciples to Have Great and Genuine Disagreements**

❖ **Principle #2: There Can Be Pointed and Powerful Conflict Between Proper and Personal Convictions**

- **Paul Looked at the Ministry**
- **Barnabus Looked at the Man**

❖ **Principle #3: It May be Appropriate for a Plan and Period of Separation When a Problem or Purpose Cannot be Solved or Sorted Out**

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:3)

“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.” (Romans 12:10)

“Live in harmony with one another.” (Romans 12:16)

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” (Romans 12:18)

❖ **Principle #4: Sometimes the Word of God Can Find a Way to Advance Even When the Will of Men Can't Find a Way to Agree**

“For we know that all things—even our sharp disagreements—work together for good for those who love God.” (Romans 8:28)

❖ **Principle #5: If the Reality and the Result is Separation, May it be Smooth with Respect and No Rancor**

- **Three Warning Signs**

- Number one: When the issue becomes a controlling passion of your life.
- Number two: When you've started thinking about revenge against those who have hurt you.
- Number three: When you begin to attack the person and not the problem.

❖ **Principle #6: The Ultimate Goal in Christ is Eventual Reconciliation of Friendship and Expressive Restoration of Fellowship**

- **A Quitter Becomes A Trusted Friend**

"My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas." (Colossians)

"Get Mark and bring him with you because he is helpful to me in my ministry." (4:11)

❖ **Principle #7: In All Things, Hold Convictions Firm with Grace Knowing that God May Lead Others with a Holy Call Foreign to Yours**

"Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind." (Romans 14:5)

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 15:5)

“By this, all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.” (John 13:35)