

The Acts of the Apostles, Part 33: Controversial Choices

Key Scripture: Acts 15:36-16:5

Acts 15:36-41

“And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.’ 37 Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. 39 And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”

Acts 16:1-5

“Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4 As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.”

- ❖ Controversial Saying: T.S. Eliot, the famous poet
 - “Most of the evil in the world is done by people with good intentions.”
- ❖ Lesser Known Saying
 - “Christians are not perfect, just forgiven.”
- ❖ Controversial Situation: The Disagreement
 - The choice: good friends separate
- ❖ Barnabas
 - Generous
 - Acts 4:36-37, “Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.”

➤ Graceous

■ Vouches for Paul when the Disciples were afraid of him (Acts 9:26-27)

- “And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.”

■ Brought Paul into the ministry (Acts 11:25-26)

- “So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for [Paul], and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

❖ Headstrong???

➤ Good Men, Different Views

➤ Right or Wrong???

❖ Cookie Cutter Christians

➤ No two alike

- Regular people with an Almighty God!

❖ Doubled Effect: NOT a Split!

➤ God truly blessed them both.

❖ Timothy Joins the Party

➤ Product of a mixed cultural background.

❖ Controversial Situation: Timothy's Choice

➤ Paul's conflicting view and action

- Galatians 5:1-6

- “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. 2 Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. 3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. 4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. 5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. 6 **For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.**”

- Acts 16:3

- “Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.”

- ❖ Another saying...

- “Pick your battles, buddy.” - Mom (1955 - 2015)
 - Which “fight” do you *really* want to win?

- ❖ Controversial Choices

- The saying, T.S. Eliot.
 - “Most of the evil in this world is done by people with good intentions.”
- Weighing the evidence

- ❖ BIG God, Personal Impact

- Creator of the Universe and everything in it.
 - Establisher of boundaries
- Sacrificed Himself for you.
 - Knows you, loves you, died to redeem you.

❖ Break that Cookie Cutter!

- Similar, but not the same

❖ Good Intentions vs GOD Intentions

- Controversial Choices for the Kingdom of God
- **“So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.” (Acts 16:5)**