

A Church with Challenging Conflicts

by Keith Malcomson

This sermon delves into the conflicts and divisions that arose among early believers, focusing on the split between Paul and Barnabas at the church in Antioch. It highlights the importance of charity, love in action, in resolving conflicts and restoring relationships. The story of John Mark's redemption after deserting the mission field serves as a powerful example of how charity can lead to transformation and fruitfulness in ministry.

Scripture: Acts 15:39, 1 Corinthians 13:5, 1 Corinthians 13:13, 1 Corinthians 13:4, 2 Timothy 4:11, Philemon 1:24, 1 Peter 5:13, Colossians 4:10

Topics: "Conflict Resolution", "The Power of Redemption"

Description

This sermon delves into the conflicts and divisions that arose among early believers, focusing on the split between Paul and Barnabas at the church in Antioch. It highlights the importance of charity, love in action, in resolving conflicts and restoring relationships. The story of John Mark's redemption after deserting the mission field serves as a powerful example of how charity can lead to transformation and fruitfulness in ministry.

Transcript

You have your Bible here tonight, will you turn with me to the book of Acts chapter 15. Acts chapter 15, as I said before, going back to November the 7th, I believe we suddenly stopped on our series on the Antioch church. We were doing a full series and we've seen that there's marks in connection with the church at Antioch that we read about, especially in the book of Acts that have a great importance for us here and all believers.

But when the attack happened in Israel, we immediately stopped. I didn't post part seven of that. I'd done it this morning.

So it's not live online, but I wanted to come back and finish this series because it is important, but we have 14 messages on Israel, but I don't want us to lose the importance of what the Bible teaches about the church at Antioch. After the church of Jerusalem, the church at Antioch is the next most important church that we read about in the early church. Half of the book of Acts centers around the church of Jerusalem.

Then suddenly the rest of the book of Acts moves to the church at Antioch and to the missionary travels of Paul. So that's what we've dealt with over several messages. Tonight this is part eight that we're going to deal with.

My message tonight, and we dealt with last time in part seven, a contending church, the church at Antioch and its leadership proved to be a contending church that earnestly contended for the faith. But dovetailing with this, and this is next in line with what we read of in the book of Acts. This is my message tonight.

A church with challenging conflicts. Reading from Acts chapter 15, and you can follow together reading from verse 35. Acts chapter 15 and verse 35 reading to 41.

Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch teaching and preaching the word of the Lord with many others also. And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamathelia and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder one from the other. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed on to Cyprus.

And Paul chose Silas and departed being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches. Let's pray together and ask for God's help and blessing upon us as we deal with a church with challenging conflicts.

Father, we ask for your grace and your love and your mercy. We are realizing that even amongst genuine believers, nor God issues can arise in relationships, nor God impersonalities and ways of doing things and ways of understanding the scripture. And father, we pray tonight that a gap be loved, that the love of Jesus Christ would be shed abroad in our hearts by the power of your Holy Spirit.

Help us to learn from this dispute between Paul and Barnabas, nor God that involved John Mark. Father, I'm asking of you to open up the scriptures, teach us, oh God. We recognize our human frailty.

We recognize our proneness while we live in these physical bodies with these natural minds. And father, we want to humble ourself tonight, nor God we ask of you as a church that you preserve unity, nor God that you'd protect the love of Christ, nor God that you'd watch over us that we don't get involved in foolish things that aren't right. But oh God, that we'd contend earnestly against heresy, against open sin, against apostasy, but oh God, to be very gracious and large hearted and understand standing when it involves the weakness and frailty of humanity.

Father, we do love you and thank you for salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ tonight in Jesus mighty name. Amen. Amen.

We're dealing with this part eight in this series. Last time we dealt with contending for the faith. We saw in that last message how Paul at Antioch contended against Peter to his face publicly before everyone.

Paul contending publicly against Peter saying you're wrong, you're to be blamed. Why was it so militant, so strong? Because it involved the gospel, the issue of salvation, of how you're born again, justification by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone. It was so important that Paul, the younger believer who doesn't have the history of Peter, actually rose up at Antioch and contended against him in front of all the young Christians.

You know why he was so adamant, so radical and unflinching to oppose Peter to his face? It was because Peter was compromising on essentials. Thank God it was only temporary, only for a time, and that there

was a turning, there was a changing. But here as we come to this issue tonight, a church with challenging conflicts, we're not dealing with vital salvation or heresy or apostasy or morality.

We're not dealing with them. We're actually dealing with issues that easily arise amongst genuine Christians born again. There's no question over their faith or their holiness or their soundness and doctrine.

There's no question. But real issues arise where real men of God, real preachers in a real church like Antioch can arise. They have revival, spiritual gifts, gifted ministry.

They are seeing thousands come to the Lord, and yet real issues can arise amongst them. We need to be very careful when we deal with this. And so let's go straight into this message tonight.

Antioch was a church with challenging conflicts. It was a church that real issues could arise amongst real believers that weren't good, genuine believers, but with issues that weren't essential. And problems come out of that, and it shouldn't have been an issue.

It's sad. It grieves our heart to see it in the body of Christ, but it did happen amongst genuine believers. And you know what? We ought to see how it was handled at Antioch.

Please follow with me as we begin to go into this message here. In Acts chapter 15, 35 where we read, this is what it says, Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch. Here they are.

They had just come from Jerusalem. They'd been to Jerusalem over this dispute about law and grace, circumcision, Judaism, and biblical Christianity. They had to go up there and dispute over it about the acceptance of the Gentiles by faith without circumcision, without keeping the law, that they are saved by grace by Christ.

They just returned from there. It was a big global dispute. It engulfed the entire church in Jerusalem and all the early churches.

It affected all the early churches in such an important way that they had to go up to Jerusalem to deal with this. And so here in chapter 15, 35, they just come back from Jerusalem. They just come out of this controversy.

It has been settled. Now we see that James, Peter, Paul, the Gentiles, and the Jews are all on the agreement about the new birth, about salvation, about the Gentiles coming into the body of Christ. It has been settled.

Thank God this doctrinal issue was now settled. This issue that could have split the entire early church was now settled. It was a doctrinal issue.

It was a very important issue. And these men of God resolved it. But now you have Paul also and Barnabas back in Antioch once again, back in their home church, back in this local body of believers, back in their own spiritual family.

And it says that Paul and Barnabas continued in Antioch. In other words, they stayed there. They settled down there for a period of time.

After this great dispute, they're there in the church. What are they doing there? It says teaching and preaching the word of the Lord with many others also. So what were they doing for this period of time? They were just continuing in the local body.

They've already done one missionary trip. They've already dealt with the dispute of Jerusalem. Now here they're back in Antioch again.

They're apostles, not just a Bible teacher, not just a prophet anymore. They're now missionaries. They're now apostolic ministries that actually traveled establishing new churches.

But here they are when they come back to their own home church, they just settle back into teaching the word of God and preaching. Notice the two words it mentions here. What were they doing? Teaching and preaching.

Some people don't understand there's a difference. I've heard very sensible, intelligent pastors go, I don't see a difference. The two words are different.

They're not the same. They're self-explanatory. You can study it.

Teaching is not the same as preaching. The two words mean something different. Teaching means to lay out, explain, or to expound the word of God.

Notice that both teaching and preaching has to do with the word of the Lord, the written scriptures. You teach the word of God. You preach the word of God.

Both of them deal with this book, but they're two different things. Teaching is when you take the word of the Lord and you begin to open it, explain it, examine it, open it up, begin to lay it out step by step. That is teaching, systematically to open up the word of God.

Preaching is not the same. The word preaching means to proclaim. In other words, it's not just an expounding of the text.

Believe me, if you hang around preachers very long or the body of Christ, you're going to see a distinction. A man can preach without explaining scripture. He is exhorting.

He is proclaiming. You could understand and know everything. In fact, a preacher, when a man preaches, you could go, I know all that.

I've heard it a hundred times, and still it inspires your heart. You could say there's not one new thing I learned tonight, but oh, my heart is warm towards Jesus. I've been encouraged afresh.

Teaching is different. Teaching, you will learn. You will be taught.

You're going to learn things. You're going to have things explained to you, and you'll also be edified in that. We see that both Barnabas and Paul are now in Antioch, and they're teaching and preaching the word of God.

You can't teach unless you open the word of God. You can't preach unless you open the word of God. I do not like preachers who neglect the Bible.

They get up to teach. They don't even open the Bible. They get up to preach.

They don't even have a text of There's something wrong with that. Notice that Paul and Barnabas, what did they do in the church? They taught and preached the word of the Lord. You can't just tell stories.

You can't just testify. You can't just give feelings, and impressions, and dreams, and visions. You've got to teach the word of God, or it's going to affect the body of Christ, and that's what they were doing.

But notice, it says, with many others also. It wasn't only these two men. There were others as well.

I don't believe it's just the other three men we dealt with in another message when we dealt with the five elders, or five leaders. I believe there's other preachers and teachers arising in this church. I believe it's a growing church, an expanded church, a revived church, and so God starts to raise up other teachers, other preachers, and it wasn't just confined to one man in the local church.

No, not at all. Many others also. There were other areas of ministry in that local church.

Look what it says in verse 36, and some days after. So here they are, they've been back in the church. They are apostles, but in the local church, they're teaching, they're preaching, they're staying in the one church.

This is their home family. This is the base that they come back from missionary trips, and they go out for missionary trips. This is the local church, as we said.

It's a missionary church. They send out missionaries. But it says, after some days, Paul said unto Barnabas, let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we had preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.

So look at this. We know that on the first missionary journey, the Spirit of God said, separate them, send them. We know that.

We see that the gifts of the Holy Spirit were in operation. The Spirit of God spoke distinctly to the church, but that doesn't happen here. They've been there, and suddenly Paul takes the initiative.

There's no mention of the gifts, no mention of the Holy Spirit speaking to him, no mention of visions or prophecies or mystical anything. Paul simply says to Barnabas, let us go and visit our brethren. Do you see the normalcy of this in the body of Christ? Do you know what this is? It's a burden.

It's a desire. You know, it must be a year to a couple of years now. I wonder how they're doing.

I wonder how our brothers are doing. I wonder how the churches are doing. Barnabas, why don't we go? See, this was a care, a big concern.

It was a burden, not a special revelation. It was a deep burden and concern, and so he says to Barnabas, let's go visit our brethren, to whom we preach the word of the Lord. Do you see how they keep mentioning this, preaching the word of the Lord, preaching the scriptures, preaching Christ? Saints of God never take this lightly.

Paul says to Timothy, a young preacher, preach the word. If you're called to be a preacher, get into this book, preach the word, not your ideas, not special revelations. Don't be smart with this book.

Just preach the word and you'll never run dry. Never, ever, ever, ever. Why do you think I've got some special ability or gifting or revelation? Now I can just keep going and going and going.

Do you know what my secret is? I preach the word of God, and it's limitless. I tell you, it's an overflowing pool that never comes to an end. It flows and it flows and it flows and it flows, and it keeps the preacher fresh, and I can't keep up with it.

So we just preach the word of God. It's a tremendous thing. And so this is going to be the second missionary journey, going out from the church at Antioch, with Paul suggesting to Barnabas, let us go.

Notice Paul initiates it and says to Barnabas, the first time Barnabas was leading. Now Paul is leading, as we spoke about in another message, and the call of God is upon them. Paul wants to go with Barnabas.

Paul expects to go with Barnabas. Paul suggests that he goes with Barnabas. There's nothing else on his mind.

And look what he says, let's go visit our brethren. Let's go back through all those churches. Let's follow it systematically.

All the churches we preached in, all the places we've been, all those cities, the cities, one city after another. In other words, he's got a pattern. Let's go together.

Let's go back through these churches, and let's start to visit them. So he's got a very logical, practical pattern for ministry. And he suggests they go, that's the context.

You'll say, where's the conflict? Let me show you where the conflict is. What could go wrong? You've got two men of God. Both are gifted and called.

Both are in ministry. Both work well together. Both of them are nice guys.

They're not immature. They're not children. They're not young believers.

They're not fleshly. They're not carnal. They're not heretics.

You know what they are? They're two men of God. They're qualified for ministry. They're gifted in ministry.

What could go wrong when you have men like this? And they both are leaders, preachers in the church at Antioch. Nothing could go wrong with this scenario, could it? Or could it? Let me give you a few points here as we begin to look at a church with challenging conflicts. Number one, the cause of conflicts.

The cause of conflicts. The cause of this conflict between Paul and Barnabas was not heresy. Neither was it morality.

It was an issue of personal conviction that wasn't an essential of the faith. It says in Proverbs 17, 14, the beginning of strife is as when one let us out water. Listen to that again.

The beginning of strife. Not the middle of it. Not the end of it.

The beginning. When strife is just beginning, conflict is just beginning. When an issue begins to arise between two people, what is it like? It is like when you just begin to let water out.

Do you know what's going to happen? It's going to begin to gush. But it begins very lightly in a very small manner. When you start letting strife out, don't think it's going to end there.

You stir up strife. What does the beginning of strife? You can have a little bit of strife. You can play with strife.

You can control strife. Once you initiate it or begin it, it's going to come gushing out. It leads to something.

You can play with strife and think you'll walk away and it won't come to anything. When you initiate strife, it's going to go somewhere. Once strife is stirred up, it doesn't usually evaporate.

That's what's so dangerous about strife. Then it goes on to say here, it says, therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with. Before you even begin meddle with contention, you may live to regret.

You don't even know what the consequence of it will be. It could lead to a split relationship. It can lead to damage that you cannot fix.

You begin. You think it's a small issue. It often is a small issue, but you don't realize where it goes.

Be very careful when you handle strife. You know in the Proverbs, it says, don't take a dog by its ears. Why do you think that is? Do you honestly think you're going to grab a dog's ears unless you're stroking it like my Shiloh? She likes her ears done.

But I tell you, let someone come along, a stranger. You play with the dog's ears. You may live to regret it.

You know why? There's going to be a reaction. You can't go and pull any dog's ears unless you know its character. Like my Shiloh, she's very unusual.

Beagles are unusual. But the average dog out there, I will not pull its ears because I'm going to have a kickback that I do not like. And so the Word of God warns us about this, about strife, about the beginning of strife.

Look what it says here in Acts 15 verse 37, and Barnabas determined. So Paul has said to him, let's go on a second missionary journey. Let's go visit all our brethren in the church to see how they are.

We care about them. What is Barnabas' immediate response? Verse 37, and Barnabas determined to take. He didn't discuss he determined.

The word determined means to deliberate in your mind, to resolve in your mind, to think through the whole issue. So as soon as Paul suggests this, what does Barnabas do? He determines. That's a strong statement.

He has already settled in his mind. He has made a decision. You know when someone makes a decision, they determine.

They're not going to listen to you often. They don't come asking opinions. Be very careful about making a determined position, then coming to try to discuss.

Is your heart open? Do you want to hear what the word of God says? Or do you want someone else's wisdom? Or have you already made a determination? Then you're throwing it out there for us to discuss. If you've already made a determined decision, no openness, no discussion, but we're meant to work

together. Maybe you should be more careful.

And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. So there's a young man called John Mark. He's determined.

It doesn't matter what Paul says. It doesn't matter what Paul thinks. He is determined.

Soon as this issue of a second trip, I will take John Mark with me. No discussion. Do you see this is two men of God, godly, mature men.

This is sort of character for Barnabas. Barnabas is often a gracious man, a large hearted man. We've dealt with them several times.

He is an extremely large hearted man. He doesn't look large hearted here. He is determined.

I am going to do this. This young man is going with us. Then it says, but Paul thought not good to take with them who departed from them from Pamphilia and went not with them to the work.

Do you see what happens here? Barnabas is determined. I'm taking this young man. Paul says, no way.

You've got a conflict here. This point one, the cause of conflicts are the cause of this conflict. What was the cause of the conflict? This determination to take this young man with them.

Why was it so controversial? Let's look for a second at this young man, John Mark. He was called John by his Jewish friends. It's a Jewish name, John, but he's also called Mark in our Bible.

That's a Gentile name. And amongst the Gentile churches, he was renowned as Mark. And we see in our Bible he's called John Mark.

When we look at what Luke writes here in the book of Acts, three times he's called John Mark. Twice he's just called John. One time he's just called Mark.

And then when you go over to the epistles, he is only called Mark within those particular letters. And so you have this young man. He is a notable, often mentioned young man in our Bible.

Listen to what it says in chapter 12, verse 12. We want to see who this John Mark is. He is going to be the cause of a great contention between two great men of God, two very gifted men of God, this young man.

But who is he? It says in chapter 12, verse 12. And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark. Do you see in the church in Jerusalem was a woman called Mary who had a house.

This was the incident when Peter's put in prison and they call a prayer meeting. They're going to have a prayer meeting. Where do they meet? In Mary's house.

There's so many Marys in our Bible. You've got to explain which Mary it is. You know, Israel was a bit like Ireland.

If you're 40 and over, there's about a 15% chance your name is Mary. Maybe I'm exaggerating slightly, but it often seems that way. Do you know Israel was the same? There's so many Marys.

You've got to explain who is this Mary? Well, it explains, look, her house has to be big enough. She's obviously got wealth. And so to explain where is the prayer meeting being handled? Mary's house, John Mark's mother.

That's who it actually is. It's a very clear, and it says where many were gathered together to pray. The husband isn't mentioned.

It's called her house. So I'm assuming she's a widow. Her husband is dead.

Her husband isn't there, but she does have a son called John Mark. Again, this is what it says in chapter 12 verse 25. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry and took with them John, whose surname is Mark.

So do you see when Paul and Barnabas were in Jerusalem, they come back to Antioch. They bring him from Jerusalem to Antioch. And for a period of time, he's there in the church at Antioch.

He's actually brought from mommy's house. He used to live with mommy in Jerusalem, but now he's living with these men of God in Antioch. What a big change.

Can you imagine traveling with these two men in a new city, in a dynamic church, being involved in this wonderful revival? And then it says in chapter 13 and verse five, and when they were at Salamis, this is just after Paul and Barnabas step out on the first missionary journey. Look what it says. They preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.

And they had also John to their minister. So he lived with his mommy in Jerusalem. He moved to Antioch with these two men of God and admits of a move of God.

Then he actually travels with them. It wasn't only Saul and Barnabas who went off on this missionary trip. It was actually this young man, John Mark, went out on the first missionary trip with the apostles from the church at Antioch.

And it says he was their minister or their under helper. He was helping them. He wasn't a preacher, but he is a helper in the ministry.

It then says in chapter 13, verse 13, now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. Do you see what's just happened? He traveled with them all through Cyprus. There was no problem.

But then they get to Asia and they start encountering riots, stonings. And suddenly it says this little statement that John departing from them returned to Jerusalem. He didn't go back to Antioch.

Why did he go to Jerusalem? Because that's where his mommy is. Okay. He didn't go back to Antioch where they're sent out on ministry.

He is leaving ministry and he returns to Jerusalem. Why would he do that? Do you know they've just been in Cyprus, but as soon as they get to Asia, he doesn't want to be there anymore. You know why? Trouble kicks in.

There was no trouble in Cyprus, but there is in Asia. But other certain things also happen. In Cyprus, Barnabas is in charge.

Soon as they get to Asia, Paul is now in charge. So a change of this leadership, it was always Barnabas and Paul. Now what is it? It is now Paul and Barnabas.

Also before it was always Saul of Tarsus. Now he changes his name to Paul. It's not Saul anymore.

There was a change of his name. There's also a change in how they do missionary activity. You see in Cyprus, they went to every town.

They evangelized. They crisscrossed the entire island, every single time. Now in Asia, you know where they're going? They're going to the main centers of population, not all the side villages.

They're not hitting every town. They're strategic now. So there's a whole change that is going on in the method of evangelism, in the leadership, in this filling of the spirit by Paul.

And here's this young man. You know what he does? He departs from them. And here on the second missionary journey, that was the first missionary journey.

And Paul and Barnabas finished it alone. Then they come back to Jerusalem. Guess who's there? John Mark.

He's back there in Antioch. And you know what happens when it comes to this point of the second missionary journey? Barnabas said, I determined to take John Mark. Paul said, no way, Jose.

He's not going with us. So you have this dispute over this young man. This is my first point.

The cause of this conflict are the cause of all conflicts. What are the cause of all conflict? Thinking differently. This isn't a doctrinal issue.

This isn't a moral issue. This isn't a foundational issue, but it is an issue of real convictions. The two men of God, they're both men of God.

They're both holy. They're both walked with God, but they have a difference of opinion. We're going to look at this a bit more.

And notice that in the writing of John Mark, Luke is writing this history in the book of Acts. He's very careful how he talks about John Mark. Some people I've met in the church that would have damned John Mark to hell.

You're going to see this as we go through this. Luke doesn't. He gives facts.

He deals with details. He doesn't hide it. He shows you exactly what John Mark done.

John Mark departed. He gives you all the information, but no damning of him, no name calling of him. I'm calling him a mommy's boy, but Luke didn't call him that.

Okay. Luke is very protective. He just gives you the details.

He doesn't obscure the details. Neither does he damn him. He just gives you the information.

Point two, the concern of the conflicts. What is the concern in Paul's heart? Why was Paul so strong that it led to a division between these two men? What is so important? Paul, why are you making such a stand?

Barnabas, why are you making such a stand? What is the concern in both of their hearts? Look at verse 38. But Paul thought it not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia and went not to with them to the work.

Let's look at Paul's reason or the motive of his heart. Why was Paul so determined? Determined he is not going with us. Verse 13, chapter 13, verse 13, John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

That's his reason. Why is it when Barnabas says, let's take him with us? Paul says, no, absolutely not. What's his reason? Is he right? Or is Barnabas right? This is Paul's reason that he gives.

John departed from us. But Paul thought it not good to take him with them, who departed from them. You have it twice mentioned.

He departed at this certain place. That's why Paul says, he's not coming on a second missionary journey. You know why? When we got in trouble, he left us.

He departed from us. See that word departed is the Greek word apostemio. It's a very important Greek word.

It means to remove, instigate a revolt, to desist, to desert, to withdraw yourself, to separate yourself. It's actually a root meaning that's often used for divorce. When a husband divorces a wife, this is a word that's used for that, where they separate themselves or they remove themselves or they break a commitment.

So you see here with this word depart, this young man, he wasn't an apostle. He wasn't a gifted ministry, but he is with them to help them in the ministry, in the work of God. He's meant to help them.

A young guy going with them to help them. But Paul says, you departed. You divorced yourself.

You left us. You revolted. You rebelled.

When the going got tough, John Mark went home to mommy in Jerusalem. I'm very hard on him. I won't be by the end, okay? So don't worry.

We'll redeem John Mark by the end of this. Just hold your horses. It says in Proverbs 25, 19, confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth and a foot out of joint.

Have you had a broken tooth or a foot out of joint? Just try to use that foot. It's out of joint. Go and lean all your weight on it.

Absolutely depend on it. You're in trouble. That foot's going to let you down.

Or what about that tooth that is broken? Just use it like you always did in the past. That tooth you've broken, just carry on the same. Go eat your ice cream with that broken tooth and we'll see your reaction.

His face crunched up there. He knows what it's like with that tooth when the ice cream hits it when it ought not to. You see, Scripture is very clear.

It gives us wisdom like this. Why are you relying on unfaithful men? They've let you down before. They weren't dependable.

John Mark left you on the mission field at a hard time. You needed his help. He deserted you.

You know what we're like? Oh sure, it's okay. You know what Paul says? You left me once. See, Paul could be excused for letting him be there the first time.

Imagine letting him come the second time and he'd done the same in Asia. Can you imagine doing that a second time? No, you wouldn't blame John Mark. You'd blame Paul.

Paul, no, it's your fault. You took him out there when you'd seen it before. Well, let's just hope for the best.

Let's just take him and we'll see if he can redeem himself. If he would have done the same, Paul, it would have been your fault this particular, this second time around. So we can understand Paul saying he's not coming.

He left us. He deserted us. Let's see Barnabas's reason.

Why did Barnabas insist on taking him? Who was Barnabas? Do you remember who Barnabas was? Chapter 4 verse 36 talking about Barnabas and Jesus, who by the apostles was called, was surnamed Barnabas, which is being interpreted the son of consolation or the son of encouragement. Barnabas, his real name's Jesus, but he's given this name. The apostles, the twelve, nicknamed him the son of encouragement.

You know why? He is such an encourager. He is so large hearted. Here comes the son of encouragement.

He prophesies. He's a gifted prophet. He just oozes out encouragement.

Do you remember that when Saul first came to Jerusalem, the apostles wouldn't touch him. The Christians didn't want to touch him. They're scared of him.

But guess who he isn't? Barnabas. Barnabas had a large heart. Barnabas was a remarkable man.

He's an encourager. He always has faith in you when nobody else does. Do you see his heart here of why this problem arose? Barnabas, don't you realize John Mark let us down on the mission field? Yes, I know, but let's give him a second chance.

Let's take him. I am determined to take him. What if he fails us on the mission field? And so you've got this issue arising between them.

But is there any other reason why Barnabas is very pro-John Mark? Is there some other reason than encouragement why he's determined to take him? Listen to what it says in Colossians 4 and 10. Paul writing, speaking about his co-laborers, and he says, Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas. Do you know who John Mark was? Barnabas' nephew.

Barnabas is Mary's brother. John Mark is his nephew. He took him on the first trip.

He wants to take him on the second trip. And you know what? I want you to see something here. I want you to see Barnabas.

Barnabas is a large-hearted man of encouragement. He had a large heart for Saul when no one else would touch him. But do you know what I believe? I believe you need to be careful when you're an encourager, when you always believe in people, when you have a large heart, when you're there always

wanting to help.

Do you know biblically you could ignore certain scriptures where the scripture says, and where Paul is saying, no, don't lean on an unfaithful man. He's like a foot out of joint. And you're so large-hearted.

Or is it because he's a family member? Let's just take him again. Paul says, no. The third thing, the casualties of conflicts, Acts 15:39, look what it says.

And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder one from the other. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed onto Cyprus. The casualties of conflicts.

These were two men who loved each other, helped each other, respected each other, worked together in the ministry for years in a local church and on the mission field. But one young believer's actions, departing, and his association family-wise led to a division in these two men of God. See, there are casualties in conflicts.

When you let strife out, when you get into controversy, be very, very careful. It's understandable if it's a doctrinal issue. It's understandable.

It's vital if it's an essential of the faith about salvation. It's important if it's about immorality, sexual immorality or drunkenness. But see, when it's another issue, be very, very careful.

The contention was so sharp. The contention, it was sharp like a knife. Barnabas and Paul.

Barnabas is such a meek man, but he's determined. I am taking my nephew. I am going to give him a second chance.

Determined. It doesn't matter what Paul says. Paul is also determined.

He is not coming. In actual Greek, it means he kept on saying it. He's not coming.

He's not coming. He's definitely not coming. I'm telling you, he ain't coming.

You've got this going on. And the contention was so sharp that these two men aren't going to work together. They're not going on a missionary trip together.

They separate themselves. Young Christian, never be the cause of older believers coming into division. Do you realize you and your innocency, naivety, simplicity, purity, your lack of sanctification, your lack of weightiness, your cowardice are just pure immaturity.

Your fear of persecution. You could be the means of older Christians or of a church coming into trouble. Take heed, younger believers.

Never get in the midst of controversy. You don't want that. But here's this young man.

He is at the center of controversy. And it says they departed asunder. It means to rend apart like a garment.

You rip it in two. Now there's two parts. It used to be one.

Now it's two parts. You rip it apart. It means to put distance between you so that you're in two different places.

Do you see the casualty of this conflict? Conflicts can leave real gifted ministries, real members of the body of Christ, real brothers in Christ, men who have known each other for years to actually labor apart. This one issue overtaking John Mark on a missionary trip. I hope that this is helpful to you, Saints of God.

These are real issues that arise in the body of Christ. Notice here, this was a casualty. These two men will never travel together again.

They'll never be in local church leadership together. But they're still believers. They're still men of God.

They're still walking in holiness. They still love God and God still loves them. Neither of them condemns each other to hell.

Neither of them says he's going to hell because he doesn't see it the way I see it. He's wrong. He's in apostasy.

It's not apostasy. It was so serious, their difference, that their relationship is temporarily broken. Their ministry goes in divergent directions for the rest of their lives.

But do you know what? They don't damn each other. They're still brothers in Christ. They still love one another.

They're still in the Lord Jesus Christ and they're still serving them in the same ministries. But they're not going to work together. That was a casualty.

Be careful of strife. Do you realize strife in your marriage, your friendships, and ministry can have knock-on effects? You don't want to play with that. You don't want to leave it alone as if it's not dangerous.

Oh, they're two great men of God. A little bit of strife won't separate them. It could do.

These are the best of men in one of the greatest of churches amidst revival with all the gifts in operation. And yet contention is so strong between them. They'll never minister together hand-in-hand.

What was another casualty? The casualty wasn't, say here, Barnabas took Mark and sailed on to Cyprus. He takes his nephew and steps out on a missionary trip and sails to Cyprus. Notice what happens in verse 40.

And Paul chose Silas and departed, being recommended by the brethren and the grace of God. Which side did the church at Antioch take? Do you see how it says here in verse 39 that Barnabas and Mark went out, but they don't have the blessing of the local church. Barnabas went out.

He took Mark with them to Cyprus. There's no prayer. There's no commending by the local church.

But look what happens when Paul and Silas go out. It says they're recommended by the brethren. The church at Antioch stands with Paul and with Silas, not with Barnabas.

So here you have, is that you've got Barnabas now not being sent by Antioch and you don't read anything about his mission trip. This is the only verse. There's no chapter on Cyprus and Barnabas' missionary trip to Cyprus.

We talk about Paul's second missionary trip. We don't talk anywhere about Barnabas' second missionary trip, but I'll tell you what, he's a man of God and he's seen good ministry and God used him, but it's not recorded in our Bible. What does God record? God records Paul and Silas.

There's utter silence on Barnabas. You could be a good man, a godly man, an anointed man, a man God uses, but you could be wrong in a controversy and contention. You could be so determined to take your nephew.

Why is it so determined? Oh, but I'm an encourager. Oh, but we need to give him a second chance. Be very careful that your determination to be large hearted doesn't make you narrow hearted with your brother.

Do you see that? I'm large hearted towards John Mark. I'm very narrow with Paul, my co-labor. Do you see there's something wrong with that? Do you know biblically you can make a stand on an issue and say, I'm standing for this because the Bible says.

What about the other 15 things that you're ignoring? You're making a stand on this issue and you'll stir up trouble. If you let me talk to you, I can point out where you're ignoring 15 clear commandments to obey this commandment. Make sure you have a full understanding of scripture.

Don't pull out one scripture and say, I'm standing here or else you could be brought to John Mark and you could be narrowed to Paul. There's something wrong with that. Your encouragement and large heartedness could actually become controversy where a man known for his largeness and warmth and encouragement could become very determined towards Paul and the cause of a real dispute, of a real disappointment here.

And so you see the casualties of the conflicts. There were casualties. Don't take strife as a small issue.

Point four, providence and conflicts. A real conflict. No one's minimizing it.

No one's justifying it. No one's ignoring it. But could God still work on it? Absolutely.

These aren't men going to hell. These aren't men defending sin. These are men, and don't we all understand it? Haven't we all done it? Aren't we prone to either jealousy? Aren't we prone? I didn't say we all do it.

I said we're prone to it. Don't tell me everyone's proud or arrogant or we're all jealous. No, we're not.

We're all prone to it. We're all tempted by these things, but don't tell me that I just fall into all these things. You don't have to.

It ought not to be. Don't justify and say, well, we're all sinners. We all are jealous.

We're all proud. That's not true. We're all prone to it.

I'm sure all of us would say we've all been proud in situations. We've all been jealous in some situation. But you see, these things are real issues of the heart.

And so even where we are working through these things, we're not in a state of perfection. We're not the finished product. I haven't reached the full level of maturity in Christ.

I'm still working through issues. I could still fall into controversy where I ought not to or be determined when I ought to be humble. That can happen.

It can happen with you. And so as a body, we ought to be mindful of that. You're prone to thoughts.

You're prone to arrogance. You're prone to be determined when you shouldn't. You could be proud when you ought to be humble.

And realizing that, that ought to make you very careful. But even with all of that, God still works in your life. Do you realize lots of things go on in your life, and yet providence is still in those conflicts.

In other words, God's hidden hand to bring out good, to bring out his plan, to bring out his purpose. You could be a Barnabas, determined, going off on your missionary trip, and God will still use that. It says in Acts 15.40, and Paul chose Silas.

Silas had just come here just before all of this. That's providence. Imagine if Paul hadn't split from Barnabas, he wouldn't have taken Silas.

So look at this. Providentially, God works in this. Paul splits from Barnabas.

Now he says, I'm choosing Silas to go with me. Silas just happened to be there, a newcomer from Jerusalem. This split happens, and God providentially opens up the way for Silas to become a missionary, an apostle in the early church.

So God has his hand in a division, a split, a controversy, a broken relationship, but God still works to bring another man in to be Paul's co-labor. That's what I mean about providence in the midst of conflicts. Even in conflicts, sad, grieving, disappointing conflicts, God still works out his plan.

Not with rebels, not with sinners, but with those who love him, but they're not perfect. They're not the finished product. You're growing.

If you just jumped into maturity after getting saved, I'd be so annoyed and angry at you because I'd be going, I've got to come through all these trials, all these troubles for the past 30, 40 years, and you're just there in utter maturity. There you are in perfection. Nothing ever bothers you.

I'd be so mad at thinking all I've gone through. So say to God, I'm not hard on you. If you mess up or you stump your foot or you fall into something, I've got a large heart for you because I go, I'm patient.

I'm long suffering. I'm understanding. I may be concerned about that.

I want to speak to you about that. I'm praying for you and that, but I'm not harsh on that. Hey, I've come that way as well.

I've made a few mistakes along the way. There's been a few disappointments. And so I have a large heart for you.

And I understand that even amidst things that you're growing in and trying to find your way in, God's hand of providence is there. And so Paul chose Silas. Notice that gifted ministry choose other men for ministry like elders.

We don't take votes. We don't vote in eldership. You don't vote people into ministry.

You don't have democracy and say, what do you all think? Do you know how you get into ministry? Men of God, chosen by God, choose other men for ministry. They've got to be wise, got to be mature. Of course, they can make mistakes.

But when you're a Paul, you've got the wisdom, the knowledge, the teaching, 22 qualifications. Most churches today, they'll put you in if you can play a guitar or if you smile or if you're charismatic or if you've got dynamism or if you can preach. That's not what the Bible says, 22 qualifications to be an eldership.

Do you see how we've changed this? We've moved away from the word of God. And then it says, and they departed being commended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches.

Now God's hand of providence. Look at it. You've got two teams.

You've got four labors and two different regions working at the same time, moving through entire nations, churches, cities. So now the work is doubled, actually doubled. And you know what? You've got Barnabas suited to his task.

He's gone to Cyprus. He was from Cyprus. He's a local man.

So God has doubled this up. They were qualified for the work. They were competent for the work.

And this is what I mean, providence in the midst of conflicts. God even brings his plan, his perfect plan out of sad, disappointing things that happen. Maybe you've disappointed God.

I don't mean going off into the world, but I go, you may be stood where contentious and you shouldn't have. Do you realize God's got a plan on that? If you humble yourself, if you walk with God, if you pray, you're going to see his plan even come out of that. Point five, the cleanup after conflicts.

You see, if it was just left there, that's very disappointing. But I want you to see something. There's more to this entire story than a spoiled nephew, a large hearted man, and that largeness of heart made him very narrow and determined.

There's far more to it than this. It wasn't just that John Mark is useless, a mommy's boy who needs to stay in Jerusalem. There's more to it.

It isn't just that, that it was a sad controversy between two men of God. There's more. The cleanup after conflicts.

First of all, let's look at Barnabas. Paul writing later in 1 Corinthians chapter nine, listen to what he says. Are I only and Barnabas have not we power to forbear working? Paul writes years later about Barnabas with respect and honor, acknowledging his gift and commending him, defending him, protecting him.

And he mentions them in unity with Paul. You see, it wasn't the end of Barnabas' ministry. Oh no, he is still an apostle.

He is still in ministry. And Paul writes to the church of Corinth about Barnabas. He speaks about him well.

And so we see that years later, many years later, there isn't a rift between these two men of God. They're not working together. That's the sad part about it.

They went different directions, but God providentially worked in this. But I tell you, there's no attitude in Paul's heart against Barnabas. None whatsoever.

He writes about him in the word of God. But then let's look at John Mark. What happened to John Mark? Did he stay in mommy's house in Jerusalem or did something else happen? When you come to John Mark in the Bible, three great men, noted men in our Bible, claim association with John Mark.

The first Barnabas, the second Peter, and the third Paul. All three of them unashamedly identified themselves with this young man. He wasn't carnal.

He wasn't just fleshly. That's quite a big event to happen in a young man's life, who's going to go off into ministry. You desert the mission field.

You went back home to your mommy's house. Paul then refused to have you in ministry. And then you're the cause of two great giants in the church splitting and going different directions.

You think there's no recovery from that? You'll think your name is blackened as being a controversial individual. Is there any way back? You'll think people will just think I'm a coward. People think that I'm a deserter.

People think that I betrayed Paul. I mean, Paul speaks bad of me. Who's going to speak good of me if Paul the apostle is actually saying, you deserted me.

You left me. I don't want you working with me. Is there any hope of redemption? Yes, there is.

Saints of God, you might have failed along the way. Get up again. You may go, I'm so ashamed.

I'm going to pull my way back. Maybe I won't come and fellowship, or I won't go on evangelism again. Man, if you saw what I'd done last Saturday on the streets, I made such a mess of preaching in the open air.

I made such a mess of evangelizing. I was involved in something in this church. I'm so ashamed I'm not going back to church.

Grow up. You know what? You might have failed. Stand up.

Walk with God. Go forward. Go to the blood.

If you've done something wrong, go back, repent. Go to your brother or sister and say, I'm so sorry. Make sure there's nothing between you and your brother and sister.

Don't let the devil in on anything. Put it right, then move on with your Christian life. It's under the blood.

You may, even as I've been preaching here, you may go, I think he's getting my case. I'm getting no one's case. These notes were there four months ago, five months ago.

They're sitting ready. This message was providentially ordained for tonight, so none of you can accuse me. This is the next message, okay? We jump from part seven to part eight, and I can show you my notes from the time.

I didn't organize Israel to delay this to tonight, okay? So I'm just telling you, okay? I know human nature. Listen, the cleanup after conflicts. What happened to John Mark? Was he a layabout, lazy, cowardly, or did he approve himself? Paul writes about him time and again in a remarkable way.

Colossians chapter four verse ten, Paul's writing about his fellow labors. Listen, Ardearchus, my fellow prisoner, saluteth you. That's a young preacher who's in prison with him.

So when he's writing a letter from prison in Jerusalem, in Rome, it's in Rome in prison, and he's saying, here I've got a young man who's my fellow prisoner. Then listen to what he writes, and Marcus, that's John Mark, and Marcus, sister son to Barnabas, he's also sending greetings, my fellow prisoner, my fellow laborer. But do you know what? He's not in there as a prisoner.

He's choosing to be in there in the prison with Paul. He's one of the young men in there with Paul. He's not ashamed of Paul the prisoner.

He's not ashamed of Paul's shame. He's not ashamed of Paul. Here he is now with Paul in Rome at a time when Paul's in prison.

Isn't this a big change? You remember before he ran away to mummy's house? Not anymore. Here, here Caesar may condemn Paul to death. Guess who's in that prison cell helping Paul's end? Paul, where do you want me to go? What church do you want me to go encourage? You can't go, I'll go in your place.

I'll go into those hard areas. Who is he? John Mark. This is remarkable saints of God.

This is someone who stuck with it, stayed in the church, walked the course, pressed through, got up again, didn't let the past hinder him. Are you letting your past hinder you? Are you letting some weakness, some cowardice of the past hinder you, saying I cannot not recover my testimony? Rubbish. Get up.

Get up. Go forward with God. Maybe you failed in evangelism.

Get up and get out there again. Maybe you're ashamed in some area. Get up and walk with God.

That's what John Mark done. Then in Philemon verse 24, Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow labourers. So look at this Marcus.

He's not only a fellow prisoner with Paul. Now Paul's writing from the same prison, the same captivity and room to Philemon and he's now calling him my fellow labourer. Not only a fellow prisoner, identified with my prison time, but now he's my fellow labourer.

He is working with me. I call him a fellow labourer. Paul, that's a big change from you saying deserter, coward, rebel.

You deserted me in the mission. No way are you labouring with me. What a change.

He is right back in the heart of apostolic ministry. He is my fellow labourer. Paul's not ashamed to say that.

He works with me. He's my co-labourer. He's my helper.

He's my friend. He's a real preacher. And then it says in 2 Timothy 4 and 11, only Luke is with me.

Take Mark, he's writing to Timothy, take Mark and bring him with thee. This is the second time Paul's in prison in room. Now he's going to die.

The first time he got out and went on another missionary trip. This time is far more serious. He's going to die.

He'll never get out. What does he write to Timothy? Take Mark, bring him with you for he is profitable to me for the ministry. This is Paul's last letter.

He's going to die. There's a crown. I'm not getting out of here.

I have fought the fight. I've finished my course. It's over.

I've preached my last sermon. I'm writing my last letter. Timothy, see when you come see me this last time, bring Mark.

It's the only man he called for. This is his last days. He's going to die.

Bring Mark. Why? Because Mark is profitable to me for the ministry. Saints, do you understand what we're reading here? This is the cleanup after conflicts.

There was a recovery. There was a restoration. Oh, it looked bad.

It split two giants in the but look at him. How profitable John Mark. You know what? Paul never gave up on him either.

Paul made a stand at that time but it wasn't perpetual. He could recognize when Mark changed. He could recognize when he was a young man profitable.

Bring him with you. You know why? He's profitable. He is useful.

He has changed from the Mark I used to know way back there. Do you know if you're mature in ministry or a leader in ministry or as you grow as an older believer, never give up on the young believer. Never just hurt a young believer.

Never just say you're useless, hopeless, nothing will ever come. You don't know what comes out of a young believer. They may run from trouble.

They may desert the field of battle but you know what? Just stick around a bit. You may be shocked at that individual that maybe deserted you. They seem lazy in the church.

They seem very cowardly. They don't seem very useful in the church to the body of Christ. They keep running to mommy's house.

See tomorrow, they could become so profitable that when you're facing death and you're at the end of your ministry, you might send for them and saying, if there's one person I want brought here, it's him. There's one last statement about this young man. 1 Peter chapter 5, 13.

It says, and this is Peter writing, the church that is at Babylon elected together with you, saluted you and so does Marcus my son. Where's Marcus? He's with Peter in Babylon in Iraq. Not only is he profitable for Paul before he dies, but he is a spiritual son to Peter the apostle and there's Peter ministering in Babylon

and you know what? Here is Marcus my son.

Marcus is with me in Babylon. What a remarkable man. He's not only in Rome in a prison helping a prisoner.

He's in Babylon helping Peter to reach the Jews. Sixth and lastly, let me finish with this. Charity after conflicts.

You need charity after conflicts. There can be contentions, divisions, words spoken, differences of opinion. You better quickly get back to charity.

It says in chapter 15, 39 and the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder one from the other. The contention was so sharp. It was so sharp that they departed asunder one from the other.

The contention, do you know what Paul later writes? Years later, Paul's involved in this. Barnabas is involved with us. Paul is a part of this.

I'm a Paul man in this. I believe Paul was right. I would fall on Paul's side of it, but don't forget both of them were contentious and the contention was so sharp between them.

Both are contentious. Do you know what Paul later writes in 1 Corinthians 13 verse 5? It's beautiful. He's describing charity or the word love or the word agape.

What is agape? It's charity. It's love in action. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul beginning to describe what does love look like? What is charity? Do you know what he uses? 15 verbs, action words.

He goes on 15 distinct words. He's trying to explain to you what love looks like, charity, agape love. He uses 15 action words.

You know what that tells me? You don't love if there's no action. Did you think love was an emotion, a feeling? What do you feel? I don't love. I don't feel any love.

Who told you love's a feeling? Real agape love is an action. Charity is love in action. That's what real love is.

Paul here in 1 Corinthians 13, years after this event with Barnabas, years after controversy, he is describing what does love look like. Listen to one of the things he said. He uses 13 distinct statements, 15 verbs, 13 statements because he's trying to describe what love looks like.

Listen to what one of them says. Is not easily provoked. The word provoked there is the same as contention.

It means controversy, a burning, a sharpness. And so Paul, years later, using a similar Greek word says charity is not easily provoked. Do you wonder? I certainly do.

Did Paul learn from that situation? He was easily provoked. He made a dogmatic stand. Maybe years later in describing what charity looks like, he is saying it's not easily provoked.

Love is an amazing thing. It does not behave itself unseemly. It doesn't seek its own.

Are you a selfish person? That's not loving. It is not easily provoked. Are you easily provoked? Someone says something, does something, you easily flare up.

You burn. Oh, you're so controlled. You control your tongue.

You control your outward manifestation. But is it burning in you? Are you easily stirred up to controversy? Then you lack love. You need love, charity to fill you.

If you went through and read 1 Corinthians 13 tonight, you're going to see the answer to controversy. You see here, charity after conflicts, charity came in, love in action. Paul, I don't think, was manifesting it in acts towards Barnabas like he later would.

He'd become a man of great charity who was slow in controversy or slow in reaction. What is love? It is sacrificial. It is self-giving.

It is selfless. It is unconditional. What does love look like? It's Calvary love.

It is marked by Jesus' death on the cross. Don't you normalize love? Don't you normalize and make it human? They love me. I love them.

I like them. I love them. What sort of love are you operating on? Real love is unconditional.

It gives. It is costly. It is marked by humility.

It is not a feeling. It is a choice, a decision. It is a delight in the object, no matter what the object is like.

It is according to knowledge. It is valuable. It may not be returned.

It may not be earned. It may not be deserved. It may not be accepted.

You might suffer loss when you love, but with real love, nothing is hidden. There is no agenda, no hidden motive. It pours out of the abundance of heart.

What I'm telling you tonight, as we've just dealt with this, the church at Antioch is a church with real, serious challenges between very godly, real believers. I wish we could just cover this and pretend it doesn't happen, but Paul did challenge Peter at Antioch, and Paul did separate from Barnabas at Antioch, and these issues did arise in a church in revival, where there were great gifts, great ministries, and thousands coming to Christ. There were issues like this, but thank God, in the end, charity won, covered a multitude of sins, recovered John Mark, and a testimony is raised up that John Mark, a man who fled the field and led to division, actually becomes so profitable.

He's there in every essential place by the end of the first century. Let's pray. Father, we love you.

We bless you. Thank you for the word of God that we're, Lord God, we're no different than these early believers. We recognize the reality, the power of charity, of divine love, of Calvary love.

Lord God, we do pray, like we heard over the weekend, that the Holy Ghost would shed abroad in each one of our hearts charity, the real love of God. Father, we know that charity can restore a relationship between Barnabas and Paul. We recognize, Lord God, that charity can raise up John Mark to be an effectual, fruitful, vital member of the body of Christ again.

And Father, we want this sort of charity, this sort of love manifest in our midst. Lord God, teach us to grow in this. Help us to go deeper, that every single relationship in this church is marked by charity, largeness of heart, no matter what anyone else in this church is like, no matter what any visitor is like, that we are going to be a church marked by the love of Christ, that we have abound in love.

And Lord God, forgive us for every word, every action. Lord God, for every word spoken about a brother or sister that we shouldn't speak, every attitude, every thought, every imagination. We recognize our weakness and our proneness to these things.

And Lord God, here tonight as a church, we ask you, will you forgive us? Will you wash us? Help us, O God, to walk in this. Help us to grow and to mature, to be quick to go to each other. Lord God, to win over our brother and sister, to be slow to speak, quick to listen, that charity would mark our words, our thoughts, our motives, our actions, our deeds, and our entire future.

And Lord God, we commit ourselves into your hands. Thank you for such examples that you didn't hide this from our eyes, this split between Paul and Barnabas. But O God, you've written it in scripture for our encouragement, for our learning, for our knowledge, for our discernment.

And Father, help us to learn tonight that Lord God, even when we're an evangelizing church, even when we're a gifted church, even when we're a contending church, we must walk so carefully, concern and strive one with the other. Father, I pray in this church, Lord God, where love has been tested, where unity has been tested, where issues have arisen, we ask that the oil of the Holy Spirit would be poured in, even in these days and the week ahead and the month ahead. And Lord God, that you create a beautiful unity of the Holy Spirit of God, that where controversy or contention or division or attitudes arise, that you will take that and use it providentially to teach us and help us to go deeper, to go further, to move on, to become more Christ-like.

In Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/5kJ3wWY1uFw.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/keith-malcomson/a-church-with-challenging-conflicts/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net