

The Church - Part 9

by Les Wheeldon

The church is a place of spiritual power, but it is also a target for Satan's attack, which can take many forms, including intimidation, sin, compromise, division, and criticism.

Duration: 1:10:37

Scripture: Acts 15:8-12

Topics: "Church"

Description

In this sermon, Hodgson's favor shares a vision he had from the Lord about a great and terrible war coming to the earth. He emphasizes that this war is not two separate wars, but one continuous conflict. He draws a parallel to the First and Second World Wars, stating that they are actually one war with different phases. Hodgson's favor also discusses the importance of prophecy and how God still speaks through his prophets today. He highlights the need for silence and unity in the church when it comes to doctrinal disputes, emphasizing that salvation is the same for both Jews and Gentiles through faith, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the grace of Jesus Christ. Lastly, he warns about Satan's attacks on marriages and the importance of maintaining strong relationships to avoid hindrances in prayer.

Transcript

Well, we've looked at the church and we've looked at the ministry of the church and the truth that the church is a place of spiritual power through the fact that it is God's house of prayer. And of course, we cannot expect that Satan would leave the church to flourish and develop without our provision. Especially when we consider that the church is the focus of God's work in the earth.

This is the place of God's power and this is the focus of Satan's attack. And we've said various things, for example, we've said that the church is a heavenly community, heavenly body, heavenly community of people. We are seated in the heavenlies.

If you look at the Ephesian letter, which is particularly about the warfare of the church with the powers of darkness, you can see there that the church is seated in the heavenlies. It is to walk worthily of its heavenly calling in real practical life. And we are to stand against the powers of darkness in intercession and prayer.

This is the church. If a church is passive and not engaged in spiritual warfare by its life, by its walk, then it is not attacked. Churches are not particularly attacked if they are not a threat to the powers of darkness.

But if a church is prayerful, spiritual and making advance in spiritual realms, then there is going to be serious attack. And the aim of the attack is to bring the church out of the heavenlies into earthiness, out of prayerfulness into dullness of mind, of spirit of life. The devil does not want us to be quickened and alive in our thinking, in our spiritual life.

He does not want you to know a place of real prayer and of powerful prayer. He doesn't mind what red herrings you get caught up in. He'll love that because you can get caught up in all kinds of interesting sidelines.

That will please him. But if you really get on to know a place in prayer, you will be attacked. And so will churches.

Now when you turn to the history of the church, we can turn to the first book of the history of the church, which is the book of Acts. Other books have been written since, not inspired. But there are other books written about the history of the church which are not inspired, but which are as instructive in their supply of examples of the same principles at work.

If you read church history, you are looking at the outworking of the continued history of the church. And one of the best books you can read on the history of the church is this book here, The Pilgrim Church by Broadbent. There are certain books which I would say are absolutely essential reading for Christians who have got thoughtful minds and ability to read.

One of them is The History of the Reformation in England by Daubigny. And it's two volumes. It's about 400 pages in each volume.

It looks awful, but it's actually one of those books you can't put down for all 800 pages. It's absolutely compelling reading. And I do recommend you read it.

That is the history of the church in this country, particularly, from the beginning right through and especially concentrating on the time of the Reformation. But it gives the history of Christianity in this country. And it is quite compelling.

It's one of those books that I have no difficulty in reading. I'm not the world's best reader. I do read a lot and I can enjoy books, but when you get a book like that, you know you've found gold.

And so I recommend you read that. And the other book that is also compelling, it particularly gives you some history. Some chapters you will find duller than others, but many chapters in this book are absolutely engaging.

And you should read this book, The Pilgrim Church. And I'll quote from it tonight, that we're in the Book of Acts for the moment and we can see there that the attacks on the church, and I may have pointed this out to you before, the church was attacked from the beginning of its existence. And the attacks in the Book of Acts begin in the third chapter, or really the fourth chapter, when they were preaching and they were arrested for their preaching.

And Satan's attack on the church is to intimidate the church so that we would lose our confidence. You know it says in the Hebrews, cast not away your confidence. And the temptation in the Book of Acts in chapter 4, the first temptation was to lose their confidence in God, and to cease to witness boldly about Jesus Christ.

There's no doubt that that attack is as real and as powerful in Britain today, that we are being intimidated so that we may not speak boldly about the name of Jesus. Remember a church in London, I don't know which of the boroughs it was in, well you can guess which borough it was in, but they were ordered to remove a sign from before their church which said, Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life. Why were they ordered to remove it? Because it was exclusive of other religions.

All right. And such things are typical of the attack of Satan against the bold witness of Jesus. And there's no doubt that the devil is the enemy of the bold witness of the person of Jesus Christ.

And if he can make us frightened and lose our confidence, you see why do people stop talking about Jesus? Well they actually begin to accept some of the attacks as having grain of truth. In other words they will begin to accept that well maybe others do have a right to their own point of view. What you are saying by that is others have a right to go to hell.

Of course, if you put it in those terms you begin to realise that we are those who hold the key for eternal life for all men. And if we lose our confidence in the truth of the gospel and the power of the gospel and the truth that there's only one name by which people can be saved, we must not lose this deep conviction. And that's the first attack.

And the second attack is in Acts chapter 5 when there was sin in the church and there was compromise in the church. And if satan can make people sin and compromise in their personal life they will lose their heavenly communion with God. We are not to sell our birthright for a mess of pottage of Esau.

We are not to sell our heavenly awareness of God for passing carnal pleasure. Of course in that sense also to obtain the awareness of God, to enter into it, there must be a forsaking of the flesh and of its shallow superficial pleasures in order to enter in to the real knowledge of the Holy One. The third attack in the book of Acts is concerning the arguments that arose among the people of God because they were jealous of each other.

They believed that one was being favoured of another and so there began to be murmuring and division and so on. And one of the great, and perhaps the greatest attack of satan against the church is division and to make Christians speak ill of one another. There may be reasons why a person can be criticised, maybe legitimate reasons.

You know that it is wrong and that I would forbid anyone ever to criticise another person publicly or privately. If someone, say we had a church meeting and began to criticise a member of the church or another church publicly, I would lovingly, I hope, restrain them and say that is not permitted. It is not permissible to criticise any person publicly or privately.

You have not got that right. You may say, well how do I deal with somebody whose life isn't right or I don't like their attitude? Well the Bible has laid down clear guidelines for you and me to deal with problems in another person's life that is troubling you and the answer is you do not criticise them, you go and meet them and talk to them to see if they can be corrected and thereby you also see that it must be something substantial. You wouldn't go and say to somebody, I don't like the colour of your pullover and so on.

You would have to have a real reason and you would have to have some evidence, some actual thing to point to. I remember once someone saying to me privately, you are horrible and I thought well I'm very sorry about it and I apologised for it and I I didn't realise what I'd done but they said that you're horrible.

They were quite serious.

You're a horrible person and everything you do is horrible. This has been said to me before and so I was quite taken aback by this and apologised and said well look I'll try and be nice and see what I can do and about six months later I approached this person and said, you know, do you feel the same way about me? I said, what do you mean? And I said, well you said that I was a horrible person. Did I? They'd forgotten it.

It wasn't something they were, it was they were working out their own frustrations and I was the person that they were using as a punch bag. I hadn't even remembered it. Couldn't remember it.

But you see, I remembered it. You would wouldn't you if you're attacked like that or somebody says something horrible but you haven't remembered it. So I was very relieved that he hadn't remembered it because it showed me it was him.

It was his problem. That's all. Things happen don't they? But you see you meet somebody privately and if they won't listen to you, you take someone with them.

Who do you take with you? You take somebody sympathetic to them, not somebody sympathetic to you. Because a person sympathetic to them, if there's a real problem they will have to agree with you and will have to remonstrate with their friend. And if they if they can be brought back their friend will help them back.

And you're not to prime everything up so that you win. You are to really let the truth be decided and be its own strength of argument. If they will not listen to two of you and persist in evil speaking or wrongdoing or whatever it is they're doing, then you must take it to the church and deal with it.

It's a very serious business but it's the church is a serious, has a serious calling in this world and we are not allowed to speak ill of anyone. God has set about, set in position the means by which we are to be kept one. Now the fourth area which is not something particularly we see in the New Testament or in the book of Acts we see it in the New Testament, but the fourth area of attack on a church is in the marriages of the believers.

Satan will attack marriage relationships. He will do his best to cause misunderstanding and difficulty at home so that there will be as Peter says a hindrance in prayer. He can do various means and we can talk about marriage another time, perhaps who knows, but he attacks the believers through these various things.

Now tonight I want particularly to talk about the problems of division, how they come and how they can be solved. I'm beginning to talk about the question of division. Now I want to turn you to Acts again and this time to chapter 15 of the book of Acts because there are two kinds of division.

We've mentioned this before, two kinds of division. One is doctrinal. The other is personality.

One is to do with the truth. Luther separated from the Roman Catholic Church because of the truth, not because of personality. He was persuaded of the truth and so he caused, perhaps some would say the greatest division, but actually it wasn't really division in the church, it was something that happened there that it was bigger than just a church division, it was something far bigger.

It would take too long to go into it. But Luther was standing not for himself but for the truth. The proof of it was that he was willing to die for it.

You may remember that Luther went to Worms in Germany to a council whereby he was interrogated concerning his beliefs. And he stood there in front of the council and he said here I stand I can do no other for the doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ alone not through the sale of indulgences or the sale of forgiveness through money and so on. He stood against the whole system and by standing he split the Catholic Church.

Well again it would take too long to go into it but you remember I've told you the story of Jan Hus seven times, I've told you that story, you remember it. Jan Hus was martyred, he was a believer a hundred years before Luther. Remember I told you this? Some of you remember now? Jan Hus was a believer a hundred years before Luther and he believed and discovered the truth of scripture and taught it.

And he was in Bohemia and the king of Bohemia enjoyed his ministry and various things but the Catholic Church sought to destroy this man Hus and his name means Goose. All right? His name means Goose. And anyway he was invited to a council like Luther and he was to go down to a place called Constance in Omni.

You know you've heard of Lake Constance and he went down to Constance beside Lake Constance in Germany and he answered before the Catholic tribunal for his faith and what he was preaching. And he was granted the king of Bohemia plain promises for Jan Hus that he would be given safe passage to this investigation and back to Bohemia. He stood before the tribunal and gave his defense from scripture and various things and Jan Hus was rejected and condemned to be burnt at the stake.

And when the king of Bohemia said but you can't do this you promised to this man safe passage the Catholic cardinals and bishops said a promise made to a heretic is null and void. This is what they said and then they burnt him and he died for his faith. And Jan Hus before he died gave a prophecy.

God gave him a vision of the future and he said you will cook this goose but in a hundred years time a swan shall arise and he shall not be defeated. That was the prophecy. And a hundred years later Luther arrived.

He was the swan of the reformation and he preached and he was not defeated. It's wonderful to follow the line of prophecy not only in the bible but also by God's prophetic utterances by men of God. Tremendous prophecy wasn't it and it was fulfilled.

A hundred years from now God shall send us one and you shall not he shall not be defeated and it was true. And Luther preached and divided the whole system up and the whole world was in turmoil because of the truth of God. Tremendous isn't it? And there are other prophecies you can hear of.

Some of them very very wonderful. Have I told you anything like this before, these prophecies? I'll tell you another prophecy now and this is going to go on tape. I don't particularly mind telling you.

If you're listening on the tape you must, I'll explain why I'm hesitating. The only reason I hesitate for this prophecy is because I have never found a confirmation of this story. I like confirmation and I've never found it but here's the story and I've written to various people and sought to find out where this story originates from but it's a beautiful story and so I'll tell you it and you take it as it stands.

I've seen this in print and I say I've never found another second confirmation of it or where the source of it was when I saw it in print. I wrote to the people who printed it. They were unable to provide me with any more details but this is the story.

Hudson Taylor was on furlough from China and he was preaching in a church in England. While he was preaching he suddenly stopped and was silent for a few moments and then he began to speak and he said I had just seen a vision from the Lord of a great and terrible war coming on the face of the earth and he said this war is not one war it is two wars and these two wars are not two they are one and if anybody here knows the history of the first and second world war you know that they're actually one war. The first world war ended some people say in 1989 with the end of the Berlin wall and the collapse of communism and so on.

The process of what all we know is the process that set in motion in 1914 caused such turmoil partly they led to the communist revolution. I'm not saying it's the only reason for the communist revolution in Russia. The whole turmoil in Europe continued from the first world war and the Versailles Treaty left the conflict unresolved and led to the second world war and then that left Europe divided which ended in 1989 whatever.

He then said I see after this a great awakening in Russia tremendous awakening in Russia and I see believers going out from Russia into all the world with the gospel and then he said I'm then I see another great awakening over the whole earth immediately preceding the return of Christ. Isn't that wonderful? Now here's something for you we've seen the fulfillment of the first and the second world war two wars for the one war. Now in Russia there is a tremendous awakening going on now.

While I was in in France in the summer I was we were in one of these little hotels and there was a television there in France and because I speak French I could put it on and watch a talk by this this program they were showing this great vast auditorium in Moscow and people singing hymns and hundreds of people going forward for baptism by immersion vast numbers are turning to Christ in Russia. Tremendous isn't it? Well maybe this is the beginning of maybe believers will go out from Russia into all the world. Well the prophecy being true it is true we hear these things and we you know in the new testament God gives his prophecies.

For example Agabus prophesied there would be a famine and it was so. Someone told me that Bernadotte was in in Dublin and he prophesied the collapse of major insurance companies in Ireland the following year it happened. Tremendous isn't it? God speaks through his prophets and I praise God his prophets are still active and you know that these when you read something like Hudson Taylor's prophecy the thing that gives it real weight is because you if you know something about Hudson Taylor you think wow that was a great man and you just want it to be true don't you and that's so encouraging but you see this is the these are the these are wonderful things that you can find in here.

Beautiful aren't they? Well anyway that's done us a lot of good hasn't it already and our meeting's going let's move on but anyway it's not doesn't matter if we we're not wasting time are we?

Now the thing is you see that um we're when we come to Acts chapter 15 we're we're looking now at a doctrinal division in the church Acts chapter 15 is about a doctrinal division in the church and by the way when you hear true prophets the bible says there shall be false prophets among you the bible says that very plainly but you also notice because there are false prophets it doesn't mean that we thereby forget there are true prophets sometimes we become so obsessed with negative we forget the positive there are

true prophets of God and we praise God when he speaks prophetically not just generally but specifically now in Acts chapter 15 they had a doctrinal division and it began in verse 1 with this verse 1 of chapter 15 certain men who came down from Judea taught the brethren and said

except you be circumcised after the manner of Moses you cannot be saved they come down from Judea and told the brethren in Antioch you cannot be saved unless you're circumcised this particular doctrine continues to this day I have a friend who is a missionary I've not seen him for some years he was a missionary for many many years in Japan 30 years in Japan speak Japanese he came back got involved in the Israel thing carried away with Israel everything's Israel all of a sudden and next thing I hear he's been circumcised I can't work it out man of 70 I can't work it out but it does happen strange isn't it what people say and do but here it says that you have to be circumcised you can't be saved various things people say and then they uh the result of this in verse 2 was Paul and Barnabas

had no small argument with them you can imagine this because Paul was quite a fiery character and you can imagine Paul went to any what did you say brother you can imagine well he wouldn't have taken long and I believe that the eastern Mediterranean is particularly of this kind of character I don't know much about it but what did you say brother I don't think you know I've met people like that in all kinds of places there are people who will jump up and interrupt you while you're preaching what did you say but what can you explain that and it happens to you sometimes sometimes you like it sometimes you don't but then not often you like it but anyway so they had a big argument and so this was going to rock the whole thing people coming down from Judea these were not people coming down from

uh some little uh you know they weren't from Little Rock Arkansas you know these were these were people from the headquarters they come from Judea and they were holding the bible in one hand they were saying this is what God said in the Old Testament this is what still true today and you've got to be circumcised shook the believers so there was a big argument and they agreed that everybody would go up to Jerusalem and have a big talk about it the apostles and the elders the big ones oh when you get together with the big guns have you ever even been in a meeting with the big guns have you ever been in a meeting with the big oh you there are some big guns there are some big you can hear them boom mind you they do tend to be a bit small some of them go up with a bit of a fizz and nothing to

them afterwards but anyway and uh so off they went and both because they were the Paul and Barnabas are brought on their way by the church church you could go on for sorted out first we want this sorted out you why do we want it sorted out because it's troubling people it's beginning to trouble people it's distracting us we're not talking about the right things anymore we're talking about this and we should be talking about that it's terrible when people are caught up on negatives you know that if you're caught up on negatives you're not believing you know that the the cross is the is the entire hold your gaze if you fix your eyes on anything but the cross that which you fix your eyes on will be eternal for you if you fix your eyes on the cross the power of God will go over all and you'll

never lose hope you fix your eyes on problems you'll lose hope and the problems will become stronger and bigger to you it's a blessed thing to cast your worries on the Lord and go on happily great gift so why did they go around they were brought on their way by the church and they passed through phoenix and samaria declaring brothers we've got problems is that what they did no they declared the conversion of the gentiles they told stories about this one was saved and that one was saved and they caused great joy into all the brethren tremendous ministry to be a minister joy to the brethren not through jokes either not very fond of jokes i'm fond of real joy in the holy ghost when people tell you something that makes your heart

glad i've noticed that people who make jokes are often

depressive just shows you how skin deep their gladness is tony hancock made people laugh and committed suicide isn't there something where the way of happiness doesn't work unless you follow it the way of God better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the feast with fools isn't it well we're a nation of fools we laugh at stupid things i sometimes put a comedy program on on the radio think oh that's a bit of a light and i often thought what oh that's not funny i'm not going to tell you what people laugh at i know you know what they laugh at it's so unclean we're a nation of fools laughing at things that are not funny i can't understand the british sense of humor when i listen to it there's a nice sense of humor it's good wholesome many things that defile your own mind but this is

to cause joy to all the people and they came to jerusalem they were received at the church and the apostles and elders and they declared all things that God had done with them tremendous but then in verse five but these people got their bone this dog had got his bone they rose up certain of the sect of the pharisees which believed this is a real sect believers but pharisees and they said it's needful to circumcise them you can see them standing on now you've got to circumcise these people and they've got to keep the law of moses you can see them sort of drawing high we've got tradition on our side so they had the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter the apostles and elders two groups tremendous when the apostles and elders come together i think it's only the

elders get together there's a bit of a gap what do i mean well the word apostle can be two loads i suppose for some people it's a bit heavy but what they meant was people of real experience of God men of true calling and true anointing true men of God who knew revelation i find if you're just together with elders to consider matters oh you want something a bit more a bit of fire fed in a bit of life from above you know what i mean but it's a real thing the church is governed by elders you know that there is an apostolic commission and the church is not run by the elders commission it's run by the apostolic commission and there's a difference the apostolic commission is we will give ourselves to the ministry of the word and prayer what's the elders commission well whatever it is that

apostolic commission is what makes the church grow i must never be lost we must not confuse administration with vision and i don't mean vision about oh let's have some new thing i'm talking about real understanding of what the ministry is about it's prayer and the word of God that's what the church is built on anyway the apostles were there and the elders a good mix i wouldn't like apostles without elders by the way i'll just put it the other way around the apostles need elders they'd be too strong otherwise and some apostles have gone a little bit wrong because the elders have been too meek and yes sir yes sir three bags full sir you know there's naughty dogs in the back of the car yes sir yes sir yes sir and the elders they say brother that's not right hold back a bit on this sometimes

the apostle is too strong with everybody's fighting we can't play the game and everything goes wrong then churches can go wrong emphasis can go wrong we've got to get these we've got to understand the apostles and the elders they came together and when there have been much disputing oh dear this is a terrible church meeting isn't it you know i hope you never go to a church meeting where there's much disputing i don't think i've been to a true church meeting where there's been much disputing i have been to church meetings where there's been almost war break out but i wouldn't call it church yeah almost violence i remember one church in africa i went to and they were they started arguing publicly you could see the place about to erupt and that but it wasn't a true church it wasn't to those

people i remember someone telling me about a story where they they put in the color of the of their curtains or the color of the walls and they they disagreed about it and in the end there was such a vicious argument this two brothers said two elders said i think it's 12 they said they said right we're going to sort this out tonight outside come on and they went out and sorted it oh there you go this is would you believe it is this the lord's people god forbid i mean i don't know where these things god this isn't the god's way is it whatever it is i believe that people can be ignorant of god's ways but um so i've never seen anything quite like that in among the true spirit-filled people of god but you can have much disputing you know you can go to places where there's voices raised and

why does he say that then you can hear voices voices voices how we're ever going to get through this let's see how we got through it there was much disputing now any different words remember the bible is a very short book so it says there was much disputing there must have been an hour or two to and fro and this one says this now there paul was trying to say a few things in the midst of it when there'd be much disputing peter rose up now this is this is a beautiful word he arose it's a good thing to rise you know that in the new testament it tells us that jesus was on this on the in the boat and there was a storm and he was asleep and it tells us that the apostles came in the storm and they woke him up and they said don't you care that we die and it tells us that jesus arose now you may

not have noticed that but that was a miracle you go and stand in a rowing boat and stand up in normal conditions i'm like that when i get into a boat the first thing i grab is the side of the boat you don't see me walk across there are people who can do it but the first thing i grab is the side of the boat ease myself into a seat get as low as i can and i'm in and you won't get me out again i'm not very fond of boats but the thing is jesus arose in the storm stood there he arose in the storm i think all the sit down jesus but now i think they realized this was this was god arrived he arose and i love this moment here when peter arose in the midst he stood up and he said men and brethren and i think people began to listen you know how that a good while ago god made choice among us that the

gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and his piece is speaking with apostolic authority talking of his calling god called me i was called of god and he gave you could have told the story a hundred times but they all knew he was called of god third day god who knows the hearts bore the witness giving them the holy ghost even as he did to us he said god's confirmed my ministry look what he's done i was the first one to preach to the gentiles he said god poured out the spirit while i was preaching and then he said verse nine he put no difference between the gentiles and us and the gentiles purifying their hearts by faith now therefore why do you tempt god to put a yoke the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear but we believe that through

the grace of our lord jesus christ we shall be saved even as they and then in verse 12 he says all the multitude kept silence there was silence wonderful when somebody speaks in their silence you know one of the most wonderful moments is when everybody's quiet nobody's got anything that was pretty powerful wasn't it well that settles everything there was silence silence and when the church is in dispute over doctrinal matters there must be a moment at which god's word is declared and then silence now you will notice this that not everybody will keep silent some will speak on top of god but when that happens you can't stop a division someone won't listen to god you're going to have a division now notice what he said just for a moment before we go any further in these few words notice what

he said listen he says we are saved the same way jew and gentile did you notice we're saved the same way how are we saved this is foundational new testament apostolic declaration in a matter of a few words

he's telling everybody the foundation of the churches here it is pure hearts by what means faith outpouring of the holy ghost grace of our lord jesus christ it's simple isn't it grace faith the miracle of a new heart through the outpouring of the holy ghost there it is in those few words he gives the essentials now they were saying oh there's no essential circumcision he says no keep that out you can't be saved unless you cover your head keep that out don't make it a foundation don't you ever imply to anybody they can't be saved we're not covering this i believe in head covering my wife

practices it and so on i have no doubts in my heart whatsoever about it but i do not impose it legalistically upon the churches when i go and preach somewhere i go to all kinds of churches i don't say believe on the lord jesus christ his grace is sufficient for you and cover your heads you have to know what is foundational you have to know otherwise you'll mix things in and confuse people amen oh i've got you thinking now haven't i what are the implications of all this well you've got to know if you believe you've got to cover your head to be saved you better preach it but i won't stand with you i'm clear on it i believe it but not for salvation i know what i believe and then it goes on there's the signs oh and then barnabas and paul stand up in the signs i suppose paul has to have his

say but actually you see paul and barnabas are the second witness he's the first witness he's the second apostolic witness in the mouth of two witnesses shall every word be established two witnesses two apostolic witnesses here they were and they declared what miracles and wonders god had wrought among the gentiles by them and so they will gain witness to the grace of god and then there was peace and then verse 13 james answered james comes up now he's not um the apostle the apostle had died earlier on this is an elder here's an elder going to speak and here's an elder speaking he says men and brethren listen to me still he has declared how god at the first could visit the gentiles to take out of them a people for his name and to disagree the words of the bible here is giving the

confirmation of holy scripture the words of the prophets agree and he quotes who did he quote quote if you've got a margin you'll know amos wasn't it amos quotes amos the verses you all already knew by heart don't they he knew them all by heart i don't think he's particularly opening a skull he quotes the old testament and then even though a mere elder not an apostle he gives the word of knowledge this is my judgment and he gives his judgment in the light of his knowledge of scripture and of the present difficulty he gives this word of knowledge that is to unite the churches jews jew and gentile into one body and he speaks about we must keep from pollutions of idols from fornication from being strangled and from blood and in this masterful word he lays a word of understanding that jew and

gentile can eat together isn't that beautiful jew and gentile will eat together the jew finding it almost impossible to eat blood and here his word saying let's let's keep from blood well i believe this was a word of knowledge for the situation then i don't believe he was laying down blood is the essential problem in you know black pudding i mean i have eaten black pudding but i don't think i've eaten it since i was um saved that's only because i only ate it every week every tuesday evening as a boy and i thought everything was regulated cold beef on monday black pudding on tuesday as you figure through it anyway that's not the story well i worked on a turkey farm and i could tell you the answer to that exactly but the answer is no they don't they do bleed they do let the blood on me but

the point is we can get caught up on it almost everywhere i go when i have a question answer session somebody asks me this question what about blood i give the answer everywhere i go and it doesn't satisfy people well it does for the moment but then they forget what i said and then they come back next year and they say any question of the idea is blood they always ask the same questions but no there's no you can

eat black pudding so you can there you are can someone deal with it deal with it brother do you know that we were saying last night in our business in our in a church we know and i was saying that really people should sit with their parents or near their parents if they're you know various ages so they'll be under control where are his parents right somebody should if not somebody

should be appointed over here to all right now the point is that in this masterful world thank you brother there was unity they united they said yes that's it we can agree to that and the gentile said yes for the love of our brethren we'll agree to it you know if i worked among jews i would not eat blood i wouldn't serve pork if i invited a jewish family would i i would never eat it and i would know they're free come on you feel free if you worked among the same you wouldn't serve pork god would give you the wisdom to love these people but god wasn't saying i was back to the law he was saying oh this is let's agree let's have a harmony we're not trying to go against everything that will cause everybody to be so radical in these things that will just disregard people's feelings but

nevertheless the law is not the foundation of salvation therefore circumcision as its central symbol of the law is gone it's gone you don't have to be circumcised to be saved and they all said yes this is wonderful they agreed it's wonderful hmm and then they agreed to send this round the churches and it was wonderful harmony came it is a tremendous point in church history that it's at its first major hurdle the church overcame the enemy the book of acts is like the book of joshua they overcame they overcame they had their problems they had acan ananias and sophia yeah they did but they overcame they didn't compromise they had their problems they had their divisions and this is the truth that if a church will gather when it's under attack humbly to speak the mind of the lord god will give

us grace to overcome i don't believe that divisions are inevitable i believe that sometimes you may have to say look brothers i cannot compromise on this i have no doubt that paul would never have remained one with these pharisees who insisted on circumcision he would never have done it he would not have compromised the truth of salvation for circumcision he would not have done it and there would have been a split but through the grace of christ and the speaking of the spirit and their ability to talk together and listen to each other and to respect and love the truth of god in their midst they overcame now that's not the end of the story because to go down to to verse 36 some days after paul and barnabas now paul and barnabas were not on different sides of the argument they're on the

same side they were good friends they had labor together they had suffered together they had worked together and they said let's 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 said no let's not take him with him he left it in phansylia he didn't go with us to the work and the argument was so sharp between them that they departed asunder one from the other barnabas took mark went to cyprus paul chose cyrus and departed being recommended by the brethren to the grace of god and he went through syria and tilithia confirming the churches and after this wonderful healing in jerusalem back in antioch there is a bitter division on the basis of personality

was barnabas jealous well paul had a great ministry you know one of the truth is that whoever is in ministry will on some occasion have to recognize he's not the top notch who is the best preacher oh well i know what you're saying you didn't say anybody else while i'm here but you see the best this is the point that um at this point barnabas must have felt inferior second fiddle second fiddle and uh it's something to play the second fiddle and never feel bitter about it you need grace in all walks of life i mean i say to people that's true of preachers you know when you go to a conference and there's several preachers and

somebody comes up to you oh wasn't a wonderful meeting that no one preached and good it was fantastic on something who was to know you that he was tremendous but you see

the point is that if you have a church tea and there's two lemon cakes oh judith's lemon cake was fantastic yeah yeah yes and those tuna fish sandwiches were fantastic what about my salmon you know that it's the easiest thing isn't it jealousy and rivalries they appear over the slightest things they do well we've almost finished it we're going to look at that further another time but now i turn to my building church don't worry it's not a bible i'm not going to preach for it really but i'm just going to tell you a story there was a church in Plymouth and there were some preachers there there was a man named J N Darby, J N Darby was a pretty mighty preacher and there was a man also named Newton and Darby and Newton didn't quite agree on everything not quite and Darby was trying to plow a

furrow to get himself some kind of position in the churches he wanted to be important and Newton really wasn't going along with this and Newton gave some teaching one evening and he taught various things and he made certain comments that really were a bit borderline about real foundational truth about who Christ is and about the cross and when he made this teaching somebody was sitting there making notes making notes some of you making notes tonight and this person made notes they didn't have a doc to take them in those days so they had to rely on notes this person made notes and the notes were copied by various people afterwards and it got around a bit whether the notes were exactly what he said or not is not sure but people began to hear about these things and they began to say that's

heresy Newton is a heretic so this got to Newton and Newton wrote a statement and acknowledgement respecting certain doctrinal errors in which he said those things in that study are wrong I apologize for them and I renounce them tremendous isn't it great but it didn't satisfy Darby because Darby had another agenda he didn't want Newton's movement to replace his and so Darby insisted that this was still what Newton believed and wrote letters various people like George Miller would not reject Newton so Darby started writing letters against George Miller and even disfellowshipped the church of Miller at Bristol oh and the church at Bristol was Bethesda church and Bethesda church was excommunicated George Miller tremendous man of God and Darby was doing it because of his desire to really be

the top notch in all the churches and so even though this retraction was published and the people that didn't believe that and renounced it Darby kept using it and he used it with constant repetition so much so that the Negro brethren in the West Indies had to meet and judge the Bethesda question and Swiss peasants in the Alpine villages were obliged to examine the errors attributed to Newton and condemn it divided people everywhere and it caused them to excommunicate people like Miller and Anthony Norris Grove and various others why because Darby wanted to be the top and he manipulated various situations to condemn Newton and utterly ruined his chances in the church now some of you would have heard of J N Darby wrote a tremendous translation of the New Testament still in publication the

man was a great preacher do you know that the brethren spread the gospel throughout the whole world that's why we talked about Negro brethren in the West Indies and Swiss peasants in the Alps yes they had an influence over the whole world but in their hearts these men became ambitious and they used and this is the thing that in our understanding of division we have to understand what is truth and what is personality it's a vital distinction for truth we must fight but we do not fight flesh and blood and human personality can rise up and begin to trouble the churches where there is no trouble and begin to force divisions and questions where they are not needed statements quoted here and there out of context and building up a position the greatest truth is of course even in this one with

Barnabas and Paul divided and we'll still look a bit more at the question of personalities another time but Barnabas and Paul divided for a season but they came back together again they reconciled Paul rejected John Mark but later he worked with him and if you ask who was right and who was wrong i would say well they were both right and both wrong and they both did the wrong thing they both let sharp words come between them and the tragedy is sometimes people say this and it takes a few weeks sometimes years before people come back and say i was wrong brother forgive me i could tell you stories from church history where people have stood against the truth some cases years later come back and they repented and found the grace of God again but you know the wonder of it is that when we look

in terms of problems and divisions we see how big they are when we actually look with the eyes of God and the eyes of what he's worked through you can see that actually when you begin to look at the way things work through God does triumph he triumphed here with Barnabas and Paul and you can see the triumph of God bringing people maybe through deep brokenness whatever it is so don't be discouraged ever when you hear of problems when you hear of problems always remember it's not the last word God has the last word and here we read of a problem Paul and Barnabas for the last word is given later they were united and i believe that is more often the case than the other way around it's tremendous to see that people may have problems but later on through grace and persistent love and humility

there is perfect reconciliation and i believe that we should always have the faith in our hearts that God is able to give us the grace to triumph over every attack of Satan that's what you see in the New Testament they said when they entered the promised land the giants are there but Caleb said we'll overcome them we'll win and i believe that should be in the heart of every person we will overcome we will not let these things defeat us we will not be distracted we will overcome and we will continue in our heavenly calling and go on in prayer and triumph in the name of the Lord Amen let's pray shall we for a moment let's pray

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