

SERMON NOTES
“Dispute Resolution”
David Renwick, April 29, 2018
Matthew 18:15-20; 5:21-26; 13:24-30

Acts 15:1-20.

THE DISPUTE. 1. Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless **you** [Gentiles, foreigners, latecomers] are circumcised according to the custom of Moses [that is, according to our time-tested interpretation of Scripture] you cannot be saved [and belong to the family of God, like us]” 2. And after Paul and Barnabas had **no small dissension** and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders.

A WILLINGNESS TO MEET FACE-TO-FACE: 3 So they were sent on their way by the church, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the believers. 4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. 5 But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, “*It is necessary for them to be circumcised, and ordered to keep the law of Moses.*”

A PROCESS IN WHICH EVERYONE HAS THEIR SAY, AND NO ONE ATTACKS A PERSON’S CHARACTER:

6. The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. 7 **Peter**: After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “My brothers, you know that in the early days, God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles [in particular, the Roman centurion, Cornelius] would hear the message of the good news and become believers. 8 And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; 9 and in cleansing their hearts by faith God has made no distinction between them and us. 10 Now therefore -- why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? 11 On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus -- just as they will.”

12 **Barnabas And Paul**: The whole assembly kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles.

13 **James** (Jesus’ brother): After they finished speaking, James replied, “My brothers, listen to me. 14 Simon Peter (Simeon) has related how God first looked favorably on the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name. -- 15 This agrees with the words of the prophets, as it is written,

A STUDYING OF SCRIPTURE: 16 *After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; from its ruins I will rebuild it, and I will set it up, 17 so that all other peoples may seek the Lord — even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called. Thus says the Lord, who has been making these things known from long ago.*’

A WILLINGNESS TO LOSE THE ARGUMENT, AND A DECISION TO ASK THE WINNERS TO TREAT THE LOSERS WITH RESPECT.

19 Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God (“*the winners*”), 20 but we should write to them

- to abstain only from things polluted by idols
- and from fornication
- and from whatever has been strangled
- and from blood.

(*In other words, “Gentiles: do not to abuse the grace of God, by ignoring the Ten Commandments, or the consciences of your Jewish brothers and sisters!”*)

CARE-FRONTING

David Augsburg, Caring Enough To Confront, 1973, 2009, pp.9-10

To care is to welcome, invite, and support growth in another.

To confront effectively is to offer the maximum of useful information with the minimum of threat and stress.

Care-fronting

- is being upfront, courageous in sharing **important facts and feelings**
- while offering **genuine caring** that lifts, supports, and encourages the other.

Care-fronting

- unifies concerns for **goals—my goals, your goals, our goals**
- with concern for **relationship**

Care-Fronting

- aims to retain **something to stand for** (goals)
- as well as **someone to stand with** (relationship) without sacrificing one for the other, or collapsing one into another.

Care-Fronting

- allows each of us to be **genuinely loving**
- **without giving away one’s power** to think, choose, and act.

In such honesty, one can love powerfully and be powerfully loving.

These are not contradictory. They are complementary. *The opposite is:*

- *to express powerless love until anger erupts in loveless power—*
- *to yield in pseudo-love until one overloads to the breaking point and then to explode with demands heated to the boiling point.*

1. Matthew 5:21-26 -- Jesus summons us to be the first one to reconcile
2. Matthew 18:15-20 – Jesus calls us to think carefully about the process
3. Matthew 13:24-30 – Jesus cautions against pressing religious purity too far (Note Eph. 4:15 – Paul calls us to “speak the truth” but maintain “love”)
4. Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 1:8 Jesus commands his disciples to have a large, world-wide vision of the calling and ministry of the church
5. Matthew 16:18; John 14:27 – Jesus reminds us that the church is not ours but his. He alone is head of the church, and He will lead his church and give us peace and power when we cannot see the future.