

28. The Book of Galatians 4:12-20 (Topical)

Conflict Resolution-Part 2

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We are currently in a section in Galatians where Paul is sharing with them his concerns about how they had turned so quickly from the truth of the gospel he had delivered to them to another gospel.

This was in fact a perversion of the true gospel—a false gospel built on the lie that Gentiles had to become Jews first (convert to Judaism) before they could believe in Jesus and be Christians—

Galatians 1:6–7 (NKJV)

⁶ I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,
⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

This group of false teachers were known as the *Judaizers* who followed Paul around and once he moved on to present the gospel in other areas—they moved in behind him and sought to discredit him, challenging his claim to be an apostle and the validity of the message he preached.

These men convinced the Galatians that Paul was their enemy who didn't really care about them, causing the Galatians to turn against Paul which broke his heart and prompted him to ask them—

Galatians 4:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ **Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?**

After working tirelessly for the Galatians to make sure they had God's truth—he comes to a point where his heart is not only overwhelmed with concern for their spiritual well-being—but also with a sense of personal rejection and hurt.

The only thing that Paul had ever wanted for them was that they would know the truth and come to love Jesus as much as he did. Yet the Galatians seemed to love these deceivers more than they did Paul whom the Judaizers had convinced was a phony and not a friend—effectively driving a wedge between them and Paul.

As we said last time—so often in life our deepest hurts come from those closest to us, from the people we love and sacrifice the most for—which presents us with 2 options:

1. *Cancel them out of our lives (which is a reasonable option for acquaintances and tertiary friends but not for family or close friends)—leaving us with option 2:*
2. *Do whatever we can to resolve the conflict.*

So, this became the segue into an addendum or ancillary study we're calling '**Conflict Resolution.**'

In our last study we looked at: **I. The Reality of Conflict;** and **II. The Benefits of Conflict**

III. The Biblical Guidelines for Resolving Conflict

The Bible contains two basic messages about how believers should seek to resolve conflict in their daily lives—as one author put it:

- *First, as with most things in life, God's Word contains promises, principles and practical steps needed for resolving conflict and reconciling people.*
- *Second, it is clear that peacemaking is an essential discipling ministry of the local church, not a task reserved for professional counselors or lawyers.*

Conflicts are inevitable but dealing with them properly is critical for the health of a marriage, a family, a church or a friendship—

Galatians 5:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

Let me say at the outset—this is not going to be an exhaustive treatise on conflict resolution (that would take weeks).

What I hope to accomplish here is to start you down the right path and give you a working knowledge of the basic principles God's Word lays out for dealing with conflict in a biblical and Spirit-filled way—remembering:

Romans 12:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

A. See it as an opportunity to demonstrate obedience and be a witness

Sometimes we wonder why God has allowed a certain conflict to come into our lives.

So often the reason is because—not all conflict is bad and in fact much of it can be beneficial in growing us into maturity as Christians, and even in guiding us into God's will for our lives. Instead of viewing all conflict as something bad, Christians can learn to see it as an opportunity to please God and to draw attention to His love and power to heal and make all things new—

Ephesians 4:1-3 (NLT)

¹ Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. ² Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. ³ Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

B. Examine your part in the conflict first

This includes examining not only your actions but also your attitudes, motives, and your words—because honest self-examination will reveal our part in the conflict and help us to see where we need to change.

Bottom line—conflict gives us an opportunity to grow and demonstrate humility and obedience which pleases God and is a witness to others.

This growth takes place when we follow Jesus' command to accept responsibility for our own contributions to a problem before pointing out what others have done wrong—

Matthew 7:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Very few conflicts are the total fault of the *other* person. If you don't know how you have contributed to the conflict **you need to pray and ask God—**

Psalms 139:23–24 (NLT)

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

C. Look for steps you can personally take to quickly resolve the conflict

Few things in the Bible are as clear as the steps we are to follow when seeking to resolve conflict—particularly within the Body of Christ (Check out Matthew 18).

Each of us is commanded to make the first move when in disagreement with another—we are not to leave the conflict unresolved where it will fester and become a root of bitterness—

Matthew 5:23-24 (NLT)

²³ “So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, ²⁴ leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 4:26–27 (NLT)

²⁶ And “don't sin by letting anger control you.” Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

1. Look for common ground (something you both have in common) to then use as a 'launching off point' to resolve the conflict.

This is an important step when resolving conflict in your marriage—using your mutual love for your children or for God or some other shared passion or conviction as a starting point in resolving conflict in your marriage.

2. Sometimes forgiveness leading to resolution can be extended 'unilaterally'—

Proverbs 19:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory *is* to overlook a transgression.

If you are angry with someone, first ask yourself if the issue really is worth fighting about—often the best way of dealing with conflict is simply to overlook it and forgive the person.

But if you're going to do this, you must forgive and forget—no resentment and no remembering of the wrong done to you.

3. At other times resolution requires loving confrontation

If an offense cannot be overlooked, go privately and express your concerns to them—but don't assume that the other knows or understands your feelings.

You need to explain to them what they did and why it hurt or offended you—

Matthew 18:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

If someone is angry with you, go to them immediately (Matthew 5:23-24), even if you believe the other's anger is unjustified.

Be sure to affirm the relationship and your desire to work things out lovingly before launching into a discussion of the issues—the goal is restored fellowship and unity (not to 'blast them' and prove you're right and they're wrong).

Paul did this with the Galatians—

Galatians 4:13–15 (NKJV)

¹³ You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first.

¹⁴ And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.

Don't get defensive—just because someone comes to you wanting to work something out doesn't mean that you did something deliberately wrong.

One author—

"Sometimes an otherwise innocent word or act can cause an unexpected negative reaction in another leading to serious disagreement and or conflict.

A person can apologize for the trouble a miscommunication has caused simply because they regret the result—but all too often our own sins have played a part either in creating the conflict or in escalating it—'*Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?*' (James 4:1)

D. Get help from the church if necessary (only with conflict between two church members)

Private confrontation is a preferable first step, so long as we can speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). But if after a sincere good-faith effort to work things out on your part has failed to resolve the issue—

1. Take two or three with you as 'witnesses'—

Matthew 18:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that '*by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.*'

Now don't misunderstand what Jesus is saying here—He's not saying if they won't listen to you then—its war! So, start gathering your troops to go against them by letting everyone know what they did to you, getting people on your side—absolutely not!

In saying this Jesus is picking up on what the law of God specified for dealing with a matter in a Jewish court of law—

Deuteronomy 19:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ “One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.

In other words, the process now moves from the *informal* to the formal stage of reconciliation.

Again, the purpose here is not for *your* benefit as much as it is for *their* restoration back to God.

Therefore, you must take with you spiritually mature believers whose purpose for going with you is not to *'side with you against them'* but who desire that this person be brought back into close fellowship with the Lord.

One counselor—

“This can be done informally with a respected relative, friend or other mature and impartial individual trusted by both parties (preferably a Spirit-filled Christian).”

2. Tell it to the church leadership

If someone will not listen to you and the witnesses, then, as we are instructed, *“tell it to the church”* (pastors/elders) and allow the leadership to decide the matter for the parties involved (Matthew 18:17) as a matter of church discipline (or not).

E. Going to court is a possible last resort

If a person will not listen to the church, then we are commanded to treat them as an unbeliever (Matthew 18:17).

Does this mean that now we are free to sue in court—yes, but only as a last resort. (Child custody issues or child molestation in church...etc.)

But Paul said that this is a shame since someday we are going to be judging the world and angels (1 Corinthians 6:1-3)—can't we sit and make wise judgments now on earth with regard to the conflict we face with one another?

1 Corinthians 6:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather *let yourselves* be cheated?

➤ *“So, then what should I do when someone cheats me—just forget it? I have rights!”*

When I became a Christian, in a very real way, I gave up my personal rights when I submitted myself to the lordship of my Master Jesus Christ and became His bond-slave.

Let me paraphrase what Paul is saying here,

“The minute you go to secular courts nobody wins—the whole church loses. It loses its witness and you lose the opportunity to learn humility by dying to self instead of demanding your rights. Even if you win you’ve lost because you have placed personal gain above your witness to the world. Why don’t you just accept that you’ve been cheated and leave it at that for the sake of God’s glory—He will honor that and take care of you.”

For Paul the greater issue wasn’t who was right and who was wrong—and that proper justice would be administered. Paul wasn’t an *attorney* he was an apostle, a leader in the Church and as such he was far more concerned that as Christians our witness to the world be maintained, demonstrating the love and character of Jesus more than anything else.

Yet today we are so consumed with our rights that nothing else matters not realizing that—you can be *right* without being righteous! Nowadays Christians fill court dockets with cases against each other—and all of it taking place before unbelievers!

In the eyes of God my witness and His glory are far more important than any personal compensation I can get from suing another Christian. Therefore, if a Christian brother or sister has wronged us in any way, our response should be to forgive him or her and to leave the outcome in God’s hands.

He may compensate us or He may not—He is sovereign,
and we need to accept whatever He decides to do and move on.

It’s really sad how when it comes to money Christians will lie or not keep their word or cheat another Christian.

A few years ago, I was cheated out of a sizable inheritance by my aunt who was Christian.

I was hurt and upset, and I thought about suing but God kept me from doing it. He told me that my witness was far more important than the money—I forgave her and God took care of us.

One pastor shared this—

“An attorney friend of mine says that over the years he has counseled dozens of Christians to drop lawsuits against each other. In some ninety percent of the cases, he has been successful, and he reports that, without exception, those believers have been blessed. Also, without exception, those who insisted on resolving their disputes in court became bitter and resentful—whether they won or lost their cases. If they went to court, they always lost spiritually.

People often define peace as the absence of conflict, but God sees it differently. The absence of conflict is merely a truce, which might end overt hostilities but doesn’t resolve the underlying issues. A truce simply introduces a cold war, which often drives the conflict underground, where it smolders until erupting in physical or emotional disaster. James 3:17 says, “The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable.”

Godly wisdom, purity, and peace go hand in hand. Peace is wisdom in action and is never established at the expense of righteousness. Peace brings righteousness to bear on the situation, seeking to eliminate the source of conflict and to create right relationships. Feuding parties will know true peace only when they are willing to admit that their bitterness and hatred are wrong and humbly seek God’s grace to make things right.”

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. Reach out to us [here](#). | Want to know more? Click [here](#).