Issues that DIVIDE

How serious is division? Is it MY fault? What can I do?

1. **Doctrinal Parameters are Set by God:**
   1. I Peter 3:21, baptism now saves us. How hard is that to understand as necessity? Not disputed for years.
   2. Acts 15:1-2, dissension and dispute with the Judaisers.
      1. Who had questions? Not Judaisers. Not Paul or Barnabas. Weak brethren, I Cor 4,9,15; 2 Cor 11-12.
      2. This matter was a big deal because Paul had recently been stoned (to death) in Lystra by Jews from Antioch and Iconium because he brought Jews to Christ, Acts 14:1-19.
      3. As more Jews were converted, Judaism brought to forefront. To circumcise, or not to circumcise?
   3. Dead?
      1. The Jews traveled to track Paul down, kill him in Lystra, drug his body out of the city, Acts 14:19.
      2. Having traveled over 100 miles, would they be sure he’s dead?
      3. Imagine the laughing stock they’d be if he turns up alive after this.
      4. The disciples stood around him. What were they doing? Acts 14:20
      5. I believe Paul miraculously raised from dead as saints prayed over his body, as he miraculously came back to town, then tracked back through those same cities the very next day, preaching the Word.
   4. Acts 15 was not a beard-stroking day of decisions, for God’s Word clearly says that:
      1. The Old Law was nailed to the cross, Colossians 2:14
      2. To keep any part of the Old Law meant being a debtor to keep the whole Law, and caused one to fall from grace, Galatians 5:1-4
      3. And God’s Word does not change and metastasize, it was given and it is done, Jude 3.
      4. The rest of the apostles and other men given spiritual gifts through the laying on of hands (Acts 8:18) were consulted so that everyone can see the soundness of the doctrinal matter.
      5. God’s Word did not change or update then, just as it does not do so today, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, John 12:48, Jude 3, Revelation 22:18-19.
   5. When false doctrine was introduced, Paul and Barnabas “had no small dissension” with the false teachers, Acts 15:2. No puny fight for Truth.
      1. 4714 STASIS, a standing (properly the act)…by implication a popular uprising; figuratively controversy…
      2. Paul and Barnabas STOOD against the false doctrine and its adherents…as we must as well!
2. **What About Matters of Freedom?**
3. Not doctrinal issues, but matters we believe we are free to utilize or not.
4. These are matters that we believe would not condemn us, and are not necessary to salvation.
5. Emphasis is on “WE BELIEVE,” for the Scriptures show us that others may not agree.
6. Example of the Collection:
7. First day of the week, I Cor 16:2
8. Free will offering of the saints, Acts 5:4
9. Can we pass a plate, hat or basket? Number of men?
10. Can we use envelopes dropped in a box?
11. So long as we don’t change the nature of what we’re doing, we have freedom of method.
12. Carnival, raffle, bicycle give-away, chicken dinner?
13. Romans 14

* V.3, 13 – I can’t be dismissive to those that see things differently than I. I must consider their views.
* V.19-21 - our goal is not what makes us feel good, but peace among the brethren. No offending!
* V.22-23 – things we allow can condemn us! We cannot force the issue. Consider one another!

1. I Corinthians 8

* V.9 – our liberty is not to become a stumblingblock to the weak.
* V.12-13 – it is SIN and it is absolutely fatal. Must be avoided at all costs!

1. **“Mr. Gorbachev, Tear Down This Wall!”**
2. 2 Timothy 2:15, Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.
3. While doctrinal issues cannot be compromised in any way, anything else gives room for compromise.
4. We MUST meet on the Lord’s Day, but the time of day is not defined.
5. We MUST meet on the Lord’s Day, but other days are not defined.
6. We MUST remember the Lord’s Supper, but the number of trays, cups and servers is not defined.
7. We MUST sing songs, hymns & spiritual songs, but parts, melody, pitch and method are not defined.
8. If something cannot be done in good conscience, it is sinful to do at all.
9. If something not defined is sinful to my brother, what should my obvious response be?
10. Of all the “churches of Christ” on the peninsula and throughout the land, what divides us?
11. With most it is institutionalism, defining Christian fellowship, and what the work of the church is given to be.
12. We see these as matters of doctrine, but most regard them as matters of conscience.
13. If it is sin for us to do them because we see the lack of Divine authority, then (regardless of who the “weak brother” really is) what faithful brother would dare insist on the matter they see as a freedom?
14. Even if someone sees the dividing matter as a doctrinal matter they must comply with, where is the debate? Why the status quo?
15. The insistence on status quo when we are persisting with the great chasm separating congregations seems to fly in the face of the unity we are called to find and maintain. John 17:21-23; I Corinthians 1:10
16. As Ronald Reagan pointed to the dividing barriers of the Berlin Wall, he clearly said with expectation, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”
17. Just as the Berlin Wall fell and loved ones were reunited, (or united in first place), how much more so should we hear the Lord imploring us with great expectation to tear down the walls of division.
18. It’s not a matter of compromise or violating doctrinal matters at all. Quite the contrary, it is the will of the Lord that the issues that divide brethren be dissolved instead of being doubled down on.
19. Faithful service to the Lord is not about what we want, what we like, or even what we have grown accustomed to. It’s about knowing and doing God’s Will.

**God’s Invitation to You:**

“What Must I Do To Be Saved?”

* Hear the Gospel, John 5:24; Romans 10:17
* Believe it, John 3:16-18; John 8:24
* Repent Of Your Sins, Luke 13:35; Acts 2:38
* Confess Jesus as Christ, Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:10
* Be Baptized, Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16
* Remain Faithful for Life, John 8:31; Revelation 2:10

For The Erring Child of God:

Repent, Acts 8:22 🡪 Confess, I John 1:9 🡪 Pray, Acts 8:22

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