

The Way Forward
When It's Time to Part Company
Acts 15:36-41

Introduction: Text, Truth(s), Translated

1. When *purpose* is at risk because of *personalities* (36-38)

Acts 13:13

“Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.”

Amos 3:3

Can two people walk together without agreeing to meet?

Four driving forces: passion, pleasure, personalities & purpose

Philippians 3:5-16 (CEV)

⁵I was circumcised when I was eight days old, and I am from the nation of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin. I am a true Hebrew. As a Pharisee, I strictly obeyed the Law of Moses. ⁶And I was so eager that I even made trouble for the church. I did everything the Law demands in order to please God. ⁷But Christ has shown me that what I once thought was valuable is worthless. ⁸Nothing is as wonderful as knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have given up everything else and count it all as garbage. All I want is Christ ⁹and to know that I belong to him. I could not make myself acceptable to God by obeying the Law of Moses. God accepted me simply because of my faith in Christ. ¹⁰All I want is to know Christ and the power that raised him to life. I want to suffer and die as he did, ¹¹so that somehow I also may be raised to life. ¹²I have not yet reached my goal, and I am not perfect. But Christ has taken hold of me. So I keep on running and struggling to take hold of the prize. ¹³My friends, I don't feel that I have already arrived. But I forget what is behind, and I struggle for what is ahead. ¹⁴I run toward the goal, so that I can win the prize of being called to heaven. This is the prize that God offers because of what Christ Jesus has done. ¹⁵All of us who are mature should think in this same way. And if any of you think differently, God will make it clear to you. ¹⁶But we must keep going in the direction that we are now headed.

2. When *unity* is not confused with *uniformity* or *unanimity* (39-41)

Conflict management or conflict resolution is the recognition that most disagreements can be resolved without creating win-lose scenarios. While passion can be a blinding influence that stands in the way (disagreements over politics) spiritual maturity can actually see the hand of God. The cause of Christ is far greater than what any person or two people can do. While Paul & Barnabas disagreed passionately about John Mark, they had no disagreement about the importance of pressing forward with sharing the Gospel, planting churches or discipling new believers. Marriages are enduring, not because two people agree on everything but because they learn to agree to disagree agreeably. Paul and Barnabas were only going their separate ways geographically, not spiritually. Time would restore the relationship between Paul and John Mark (Colossians 4:10), in the meantime, the advancement of the Kingdom of God was multiplied by division.