

Have you ever had a, er, uhmm, "discussion" with someone about religious matters? Makes you want to rush right in to the next installment. Right? Or is it just me? My experience is that most are eager to tell you what they think and really don't have time to hear what you think. After all, you only have an opinion just as they do and your facts may or may not line up with their facts. Usually a request is made that, "If you are happy with your beliefs then leave me alone as I'm happy with my beliefs."

I've often marveled at the Biblical times where people allowed full discourse and thought presentation before countering with their views that either supported or opposed what was just said. It was a different time and customs and norms were very different but the results weren't too far different from today. Concerning religious matters the time was extremely different in that everybody believed that there was a "Spirit World" that controlled everything and everybody was eager to hear a twist or new take on what they believed. So opportunity to speak was always there. Again, that was the opportunity to present, and not always an acceptance.

I've always loved Luke. Mostly for the fact that he was the only contributor to the Word of God that was Gentile. Some argue that he was Jewish but as far as could be determined he was fully Greek, that is Gentile in birth and upbringing. He fell in with the Apostle Paul and his gang and became a very devout Disciple of Christ. Luke's writing of a Gospel and his Acts of the Apostles are cornerstones of the New Testament. I'd like to look at Luke's closing of his book of The Acts of the Apostles which is the closing of the Apostle Paul's ministry and life.

Starting with Acts 28: 15 for context as this was Paul reaching Rome and finally meeting Roman Christians, (15) And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.

(16) When he entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.

The next 12 verses are of Paul and his "religious discussion." Acts 28: 17-29:
(17) After three days Paul called together those who were the leading men of the Jews, and when they came together, he began saying to them, "Brethren, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.
(18) And when they had examined me, they were willing to release me because there was no ground for putting me to death.

(19) But when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar, not that I had any accusation against my nation.

(20) For this reason, therefore, I requested to see you and to speak with you, for I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel."

Observe the civil way that the Jews responded in verses 21 and 22: (21) They said to him, "We have neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren come here and reported or spoken anything bad about you.

(22) But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere."

Oops number one! They have already heard a thing or two and have somewhat of made up minds. But, they were willing to hear Paul. Verse (23) When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the Kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.

(24) Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe.

(25) And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers,

(26) saying, 'Go to this people and say, you will keep on hearing, but will not understand; And you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive;

(27) for the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes; otherwise they might see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I would heal them.'

(28) Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen."

(29) When he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.

Just to close out the book and Paul's ministry let us also look at verses 30 and 31;

(30) And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him,

(31) preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

There are several things that are worth noting about this passage but the thing that stands out most is that even with a favorable audience, that is they all believed in God and wanted to have a correct understanding of God, the facts laid out for them were in "Great Dispute." Even the great Apostle Paul could not "make" people believe a certain thing or a certain way.

Our time of communion with God, Christ and all the Saints past, present and future is both a great gift to us and a solemn command of practice for us. This is the table set by the life ministry, death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Paul saw great danger in becoming callus about this time as he wrote to the Corinthians to warn them about heir proper worship in I Cor 11:20 "Therefore when you meet it is not to eat the Lord's Supper."

That was an impossible situation for a Church to be in according to Paul. The "Love Feast" or Supper was why they should come together. It was imperative they participated as a body, as a congregation of believers, in a proper observance of Christ's command. Paul reminded them of the facts when he told the Corinthians in 11: 23-26;

(23) For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;

(24) and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'

(25) In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'

(26) For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Let us be happy that we can participate in such a wonderful observance. That we still can and do is a rare thing anymore. Most of the Churches that I knew and loved in my youth no longer offer communion service as a matter of worship. They are planned "special occasions" to be offered apart from regular activities. This falls in with the denominational world and their man-made-creeds. All the facts of scripture fail to persuade the need for the Lord's Supper. Let us do this now knowing how rare and special a people we are in doing so. Thank God for His blessings and mercies on our lives.

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