

“The Great Debate!”

1. **Intro:**

- 1.1. **Memorial Day** - a day to honor the more than **1.2 million Americans** who gave their lives for our freedoms, across **2 centuries** and **a dozen wars**.
- 1.2. On **April 26th 1920** we had, what had come to be known as *“The Great Debate”*.
 - 1.2.1. **The Topic?** Astronomy; **The Participants?** 2 Scientist Shapley & Curtis; **The Great Debate?** Size of the universe.
 - 1.2.1.1. **Shapley** argued the Milky Way as the entirety of the universe.
 - 1.2.1.2. **Curtis** – That there were separate galaxies.
- 1.3. Let's **go back to the 1st century** now:
 - 1.3.1. **The Topic?** Theology; **The Participants?** Those who held to: the gospel of works **vs.** the gospel of faith; **The Great Debate?** Sola Fide? (Faith Alone?)
- 1.4. **Then, we'll wrap up with 2008 CCM.**
 - 1.4.1. **The Topic?** When Christians disagree; **The Participants?** Us **The Great Debate?** How we handle differences in the **essentials vs.** the **non-essentials?**

2. **THE GREAT DEBATE! (1-35)**

- 2.1. **RUNNING COMMENTARY!**
- 2.2. (1-5) **The Criticism** - from unauthorized legalist believers from the mother church.
 - 2.2.1. I'll back that up later in vs.24.
- 2.3. (5) Their teaching was a denial of “salvation by **grace** through **faith!**” (See 10:43)
 - 2.3.1. Eph.2:8,9 **For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.**
 - 2.3.2. They said, “sure they can be saved...**but** what were the conditions?”
 - 2.3.2.1. On what grounds were the gentiles to be saved?
- 2.4. (5) These Pharisees are “*brothers in the Lord*”.
 - 2.4.1. When sincere Christians disagree they must:
 - [1] **Get together & see what God is doing** in the church. **And,**
 - [2] **Find out what the Word** has to say about it.
 - 2.4.2. And that's what we see happen.
- 2.5. (6-11) **Debate** of **Peter** reasons & explains to them *Sola Fide & Sola Gratia*.
- 2.6. (9) **Purifying them by faith** – (Paul) **We are justified by faith; live by faith; stand by faith; walk by faith; Christ dwells in our hearts by faith; & by faith we are victorious over the world** (Jn).

- 2.7. (11) Note how he turns the tables! (11)
- 2.7.1. It would be like me giving an invitation for salvation this morning...
*“Folks, **you** have the privilege today of being saved just like the drunks, adulterers, harlots, liars & cheats!”*
- 2.8. (12) **Testimonies** of **Barnabas & Paul** told what God was doing among the Gentiles
- 2.9. (13-21) **Judgment** of James using God’s Word. (Amos 9:11,12)
- 2.10. (20) **Why these things?** Trippy list isn’t it? Categories diff.?
- 2.10.1. It should be taken in the sense of Rev.2:14 **But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.**
- 2.10.1.1. It was a usual practice among Gentiles to use an idol’s temple for **banquets and celebrations**. Paul condemned the practice of Christians participating in these (1 Cor.10).
- 2.10.2. So, this was important for the Gentiles to *keep themselves from these & to not be a **stumbling block** to the Jews.*
- 2.11. (22-29) **Decision Ratified** by the apostles & elders.
- 2.11.1. In the decision, there was *no compromise doctrinally*, but there was *consideration practically*.
- 2.11.2. In this decree, the church asked the Gentiles **not to deliberately offend** the Jews!
- 2.11.3. **This** basic principle of **Love** is expanded in Rom 14,15 & 1 Cor.8-10.
- 2.11.3.1. (eg.) **Don’t judge** your brother; **don’t eat/drink/or anything** that would cause them to stumble; **become all things to all men**, might save some; all things are **lawful**, but not all **expedient**.
- 2.12. (30-35) **Antioch**, the 1st stop on the *Good News Tour!*
- 2.12.1. **Joy, encouragement, exhortation, strength** for the brethren.
- 2.13. **“In Essentials, Unity; in Non-essentials, Liberty; in all things, Charity!”**
- 2.13.1. Attributed to Augustine, 3rd century.
- 2.14. That’s how the **early church** handled it here:
- 2.14.1. **Essential** – hearts are only purified by **faith** (not works – vs.9)
- 2.14.1.1. **Saved by Grace** in vs.11
- 2.14.1.2. Peter would not compromise on this, & called the church to establish this “essential”!
- 2.14.2. **Non-Essentials** – in vs.20,29.
- 2.14.3. **Charity** – in vs.31.
- 2.15. That’s how I believe, the **church in 2008** should handled it also!

2.16. **Handling the Essentials w/Unity!**

2.17. **The Emerging Church** – which by its very name is difficult or impossible to define... **Why? Because it's "emerging"!**

2.17.1. What started, I believe innocently, has developed into a monster!

2.18. What **started** as a group of Christian pastors having conversations about “**our changing culture; the church's relevance in our day & age; ways to reach the lost; & the critique on what the church is doing wrong (i.e. not being good Jesus followers)**” **then shifted to discussing**, “the Inspiration of Holy Scripture; asking did Jesus really mean...; is all the Scripture God's Word?”

2.18.1. Many who were participating in the discussion ran away fast, & this developed into the **Emergent Village**.

2.19. **Thus**, since that group has turned from holding to the **Essentials** of the Christian Faith, we must stand in Unity against those who do not hold to the basic tenants of the Christian Faith.

2.19.1. **We believe the Old & NT to be plenary** (full/complete), **verbally inspired by God** (God breathed), **inerrant** (incapable of mistakes) **in the original writings, and the supreme and final authority in faith and life!** (our web site)

2.20. **Handling the Non-Essentials w/Liberty!**

2.21. **What I don't like** are those w/the spirit of the *Salem Witch Trials!*

2.21.1. Those who are **lumping people** into this movement that have **nothing to do with it; or** were originally a part of it, but ran when it took a turn.

2.21.2. My heart is **grieved** for those who have gone on **witch hunts** against many of our brothers & sisters in Christ who do things a little bit different than us.

2.22. **My heart** is with Non-essentials...**Liberty!**

2.22.1. **Change message? No! - Change method? Sure!**

2.22.2. If we're not allowed to change **methods** then congratulations...“**we're still doing church in Latin, no congregational singing, & aren't allowed to have our own bibles.**” (explain)

2.23. **My personal dealings with this.**

2.23.1. We've had a few families leave as they've pegged me for being “*Emergent*”. **Why I asked?** Because I recommend books like Ragamuffin Gospel (Brennan Manning); & Erwin McManus' books.

2.23.2. I know of no man that I agree with 100% (I'm esp thinking about pastors & commentators). [Barclay/miracles; Stott/hell; mystics - Tozer/Bro Lawrence/Frank Labauch; MacArthur/gifts; Finney/man centered gospel; Spurgeon/non-restoration for pastors; Raul/partial rapture theory; Chuck Jesus return 1981; even **me/5 point Calvinist in 80's**] But I love learning from all of them (well, not Finney)

- 2.23.2.1. **But I will read & study any man & match it with Gods Holy Writ & see if these things are so!**
- 2.23.3. **I do understand that I must be careful who I recommend.** But just know up front...if I recommend someone it doesn't mean I must now hold to everything that individual ever held to??? **When did that start?**
- 2.23.3.1. Paul didn't when he quoted the Greek poets (Epimenides & Aratus)
- 2.24. **My heart on other Pastors & their ministries...I praise God for them!**
- 2.24.1. **Share about** - Rick Warren (loving & giving); Bill Hybels (love for lost).
- 2.24.2. John MacArthur said, **"One of the surest measures of a Christian's maturity is what it takes to rob him of his joy!"** [I've been robbed]
- 2.24.3. **I won't go back to being the prideful, arrogant, pharisaical, pastor I was.**
- 2.24.4. **I will show grace** to these men by finding areas I can **emulate** them, rather than find a few areas where I can **disagree**.
- 2.24.5. I do not think I, or we as Calvary's in general, have the corner on the *Gospel Market!* – [I don't feel any need to shoot down other ministries]
- 2.25. **Handling all things w/Charity!**
- 2.25.1. **Read** Phil.1:15-18
- 2.26. **Wesley & Whitefield** both very popular, & reached 1000's in their day.
- 2.26.1. **But** became very conflicting in their theology (letters in newspaper)
- 2.26.2. Mrs. Wesley asked her husband one day, **"do you think you will see Whitefield in heaven?"** He responded **"no."** She said, **"so, he's not a converted man?"** **"Yes, of course he is, I just believe he will be so near the throne of God, that I won't see him!"**
- 2.27. **We must seek to be Biblically Faithful & Culturally Fruitful!**
- 2.28. **We must be about both the Word & our World!**
- 2.29. **We must hold to Timeless Truths & Timely Methods!**
- 2.30. **We must contend** for the faith & **contextualize** our faith! (become all things to all men)
- 2.31. **"In Essentials, Unity; in Non-essentials, Liberty; in all things, Charity!"**
- 2.32. **Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.**