Session 2

Read Acts 15:1 – 16:5. It might also be helpful to read Galatians 1 -3 as this is important parallel teaching on the same issues.

Some of the Christians from Judea are urging gentile believers to live in a particular way. What did they want them to do? Why was it important to them that they did?

Look at Galatians 2: 4- 5. Why is this such an important issue, then as now? Is there any equivalent or similar challenge facing us today in the service of Christ?

In verses 3, 4 and 5 we see different responses to the witness of Barnabas and Paul about what God is doing through them. Why do you think these different responses were received? Have you encountered a similar reaction in church – where exciting news of church growth has not been well received by others? How can we guard against this in our own church?

 Summarize in your own words the contributions of Peter (15:7–11), Paul & Barnabas (15:12), and James (15:13–21). In what ways are they similar, and what ways different? What template could we draw from this to help us learn about how we might begin to discuss and address difficult issues in our local church?

What might the signs and wonders that Paul and Barnabas speak of have been? What are the signs and wonders we should be looking for today?

In the conclusion of his judgement, James refers to the scriptures (Amos 9:11-12). What would enable us to grow in knowledge and confidence of the Bible, so that we could turn to it faithfully when there are differences of opinion amongst us? Should this be a priority for everyone, or just church leaders?

Verse 20 seems to be adding rules just at the point when they have agreed to not follow the customs of Moses. How is this different to the need for circumcision?

In his sermon, Dominic linked the activities listed in verse 20 (and repeated in verse 29) as linked to their identity in Christ rather than their identity in pagan worship. He suggested that it was about where you truly belong, who/what shapes the decisions you have, and how we share our lives together as a church. In our culture today, what are the corresponding challenges for us?

What issues or problems threaten the unity of our church? What are we doing to settle issues and preserve unity? Read Romans 14: 1 - 4. What guidance does it give to see that harmony is maintained? What concessions are you willing to make in our church, and more generally, for the sake of the consciences of your fellow Christians?

Read Acts 16: 1 - 5. Paul has fought so hard for gentiles to not be circumcised. Why then is Timothy circumcised? In what ways is it different to what Paul has fought against?

As churches today, do we shy away from the gospel potentially being costly for us? Why is that? What would you be willing to do, for the sake of the gospel, that would be costly?

Dominic ended his sermon with a final comment on the holiness of God. If God is not Holy, then our sinfulness is of no importance. If sin is of no importance, the cross achieved nothing. If the cross achieved nothing, Jesus died in vain. If Jesus died in vain, then God is mistaken. Why is the holiness of God such a difficult thing for so many today? How can we proclaim it faithfully but in a humble and loving way to a fallen and sinful world?