

Acts Chapter 15

V: 1 Certain men, un-identified men came down from the church in Jerusalem to Antioch of Syria and began to teach. They were connected to the church in Jerusalem, but not authorized by it:

Acts 15:24 “Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment.”

- What they were teaching was not in agreement with what Paul & Barnabas had been teaching.
- They’re talking about circumcision, but the real issue is “what does it take to be saved?”
- The church in Jerusalem probably had few if any Gentile believers. But as the Gospel went out many Gentiles began to receive Christ. The church in Antioch was probably mostly composed of Gentiles. When these Jews came from Jerusalem and saw the liberty that these believers had, they began to question their salvation. The Judaizers wanted to enforce the Law of Moses upon them.
- These men were teaching that you had to be circumcised in order to be saved. Nowadays you don’t hear that so much as you hear that you must be baptized to be saved, or that you must speak in tongues to be saved, or other things like that.
- There is actually a great similarity in the scriptures between the ritual of circumcision and the ritual of Baptism, because they both signify the same thing.
- The Bible teaches us that the life of the Spirit is the superior life. To live after the flesh is death, but to live after the Spirit is life - and you can’t do both.
- God gave the ritual of **circumcision**, the cutting off of the flesh to Abraham and his descendants to identify those who would live by faith in God. The rite of circumcision was the determining factor as to whether a man was a Jew or not, an identifier.
- Baptism signifies the burying of the old nature that once ruled, reckoning it dead. Burying the old nature so as to live after the life of the Spirit. Baptism is a statement that we’re going to live a spiritual life rather than a life lived after the flesh.
- So they both symbolize the same basic thing: circumcision to the Old Testament, and baptism to the New Testament believers.

Paul wrote:

Romans 2:25 “For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, then circumcision is made uncircumcision.”

- So the ritual doesn't make anyone spiritual, it's simply a symbol of what we should be. True circumcision is of the heart:

Deuteronomy 10:16 “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked?”

- The issue here is how are we saved? Is it by the blood of Jesus, His atoning sacrifice on the cross that pays the price for all of our sins? Or is it by our religious observance, or by the keeping of the Law?

Ephesians 2:8-9 “⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Galatians 3:6 “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

- We're saved by faith in Jesus.

V: 2-3 When Paul and Barnabas heard what they were teaching they stood up and withstood them, disputed with them, they didn't just let it slide.

- Sometimes we have a romanticized view of the early church, that everything was perfect and that there were no problems.
- This passage kind of bursts that bubble, they had issues and problems and it's good for us to be able to see how they worked them out, they did so in a biblical way.
- Paul and Barnabas were shepherds to their flock, they were going to protect them from false doctrine and the bondage of religion.
- Apparently Paul and Barnabas weren't able to settle the issue with them and so they had to go back to the church leaders, possibly back to the point of origin.
- The distance between Antioch and Jerusalem is about the same distance between San Francisco and L.A. - about 400 miles.
- They're traveling on foot, so it probably took them about 3 weeks to make the trek. They probably relied on the hospitality of the believers they met on the way, all the little churches that popped up and the Gospel was preached.

- They were either already Christians due to the ministry of Philip, Peter, and John previously and they were glad to hear that more were being added to the faith. Or they were Gentiles / Samaritans who were receiving the good news of Jesus presently and were glad to be saved. Either way, there was great joy.
- As they made their way to Jerusalem through Phenice and Samaria they brought great joy declaring that salvation had come to the Gentiles also. They're preaching to a mixed group of Gentiles generally.

Romans 10:15 "... how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

- The Judaizers that landed in Antioch with a heavy message of legal requirements for salvation didn't just stop in Antioch, they had been making their way to Antioch from Jerusalem, no doubt with the same message to each of the cities and churches represented in Samaria and Phenice (unless like good Jews they avoided such people).
- Now Paul and Barnabas are returning the same way that the Judaizers had come, but with a different message. The Good News, the Gospel, your sins are forgiven, Jesus paid the price!
- Some people bring great joy when they come, others bring it when they go...

V: 4 The church consisted of the general church body, the Apostles who were the primary leaders, and the elders who had been ordained by the Apostles to oversee the church.

- Bear in mind that the Apostles Peter and John were sent out by the church at times and very much served the church.
- Upon arrival they were received by the church / leaders and they immediately gave testimony of all the things that had happened on their mission trip from Antioch to Galatia and back, no doubt including the dispute most recently in Antioch.

Paul described his meeting to the churches in Galatia:

Galatians 2:2 "And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain."

A few verses later he names who he met with:

Galatians 2:9 "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision."

- After this private meeting, they then went into an open public meeting to discuss the issues.

V: 5 Then there rose up some of the believing Pharisees... like Paul there were other Pharisees that had gotten saved, but unlike Paul, they were still hanging onto the traditions and the Law, still carrying their Pharisaic baggage with them.

- Unlike the Sadducees, the Pharisees embraced the miraculous, especially the possibility of the resurrection. So when Jesus rose from the dead many of the Pharisees believed. The only problem was that they still thought you had to be a Jew first to be saved.
- Jesus was constantly at odds with the Pharisees, they were very self-righteous, and Jesus referred to them as white washed tombs, full of dead men's bones. Meaning that they looked good on the outside, but inside they were full of corruption.
- These Judaizers were again raising the issue that the Gentiles needed to be circumcised in order to be saved. They also added the need to keep the law of Moses, which would mean the sacrifices, the Sabbath, and a whole lot more.
- This would be a make it or break it scenario for the church.
- They were attempting to mix Law and grace and to pour the new wine into the old wineskins.
- They were stitching up the rent veil and blocking the new and living way to God that Jesus had opened when He died on the cross.
- They were rebuilding another wall between Jews and Gentiles that Jesus had torn down on the cross.

Ultimately they were preaching another gospel:

Galatians 1:8 "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

V: 6-7 Naturally the church came together to consider the matter and there was apparently some very lively discussion.

- It would appear that Peter sat and listened to the discussion for some time, possibly waiting for the Holy Spirit to guide him.

Proverbs 18:13 "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him."

- In the midst of that discussion Peter stood up and commanded their attention, it would appear that he was exercising his status as an apostle, in a positive way.
- Peter points out the God sent him specifically to the Gentiles, that they received the Word of God, they became believers receiving the gifts the Spirit, including speaking in tongues, and none of them had kept the Law because they were Gentiles.
- Peter made it clear that Cornelius and his household were saved by hearing and believing, not by obeying the Law of Moses.

Paul later asked the Galatian church:

Galatians 3:2 “This only would I learn of you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”

- The obvious answer was that they had received the Spirit by the hearing of faith.
- They hear of this wonderful gift of God, and they received that gift by faith. It wasn't because they had reached a degree of holiness, or because they had done certain religious works. It was simply God's gift bestowed upon them when they heard and believed by faith the Word that was preached.

V: 8 Peter here is declaring the omniscience of God, that He knows all things.

Psalm 139:1-2 “¹O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. ²Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.”

- God knows our thoughts. In the Hebrew, it is, “You know my thoughts in their origins.”

A little later on James will say:

Acts 15:18 “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”

- Their conversations were filled with and all about doctrine - in this case the omniscience of God.

V: 9 God makes no distinction between the believing Jews and the believing Gentiles - that they were purified / justified by faith, not by works of the Law.

Galatians 2:16 “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

Romans 3:9-10 “⁹What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; ¹⁰As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one:”

V: 10 Why do you tempt / test God - why are you going against what He has established?

Paul would later refer to this as a yoke of bondage:

Galatians 5:1 “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” (Law)

- This would be contradicting God by putting a yoke of bondage upon these Gentiles believers, or any believer that historically even the Jews have not been able to bear - no one except Jesus has ever actually kept the Law.

Jesus was speaking to a Jewish audience when He said:

Matthew 11:28-30 “²⁸Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”

- Peter said outright that the Law, as taught by the Pharisees, was unbearable.

Matthew 23:4 “For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.”

- This is still a transitional time for the church - the Jews were still reconciling themselves to the fact that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Law. The Law had been given in part to impart a protection to the Jews, to keep them separate from the Gentiles and their practices, but now those walls are being broken down.

V: 11 Peter then affirmed the doctrine of grace, that we’re all saved through grace.

Titus 2:11 “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.”

- Peter didn’t say: “They shall be saved, even as us,” - it was, “we shall be saved, in the same manner as they.”
- This is Peter, not Paul, but it sounds like something that Paul would say.
- Peter is acknowledging that the Jews had to come to salvation the same was as the Gentiles, through grace.
- The way to a righteous standing before God is not by my works, my effort, or my doing. It is through Jesus who has done all the work.

V: 12 Peter has just explained pretty directly how God has intended for the Gospel to go to the Gentiles, and the effect of it, that they both believed and were baptized in the Holy Spirit, just as they had been.

- Peter also explained that all of this happened without the Gentiles doing anything in relation to the Law of Moses, it was a sovereign act of God.
- This is really a great introduction to Paul & Barnabas, paving the way for their testimony.
- They kept silence, no interruptions, they simply listened.

V: 13-17 After Paul & Barnabas finish, then James the seeming leader at that time speaks - again like Peter exercising authority.

- James the brother of John had already been beheaded. There was another James, James the son of Alphaeus, (the brother of Matthew), and finally James the author of the 59th book of the Bible and like Jude the 1/2 brother of Jesus.
- James is at times referred to as “James the just” because he was truly a righteous man, he’s also referred to as “James the camel kneed” because he spent so much time kneeling in prayer.
- James refers to Peter using his Jewish name “Simeon” because he’s addressing primarily a Jewish audience.
- Peter had testified to what God had done among the Gentiles, Paul testified as to what God was doing presently among the Gentiles, now James declares what God would do in the future concerning the Gentiles. (Past, present, future)
- James declares that Peter & Paul’s testimony are both a genuine work of God, and a fulfillment of God’s prophetic Word:

Psalm 86:9 “All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify Thy name.”

Isaiah 11:10 “And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and His rest shall be glorious.”

Isaiah 42:6 “I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.”

Malachi 1:11 “For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be

offered unto My name, and a pure offering: for My name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.”

- James then goes on to quote **Amos 9:11**, James doesn't say this is the fulfillment of Amos' prophesy, he says that it's in agreement, that it matches what is happening currently. A careful read of Amos reveals that he's talking about the end times.
- Speaking of building the Tabernacle of David. They are discussing this prophesy but the Temple is still standing at the time - this is a reference to the Temple yet to be built.
- *“That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles.”* Describes those who survive the great tribulation and that the Gentiles are again included in God's plan of salvation.

Luke 21:24 “And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

- We are presently experiencing the “time of the Gentiles” but we're waiting for the “fulness of the Gentiles” because when that happens the church will be caught up to be with the Lord, the time of the Gentiles will be over and God will once again turn His attention to the nation of Israel.

V: 18 James reiterates that all of these things were prophesied of:

Isaiah 46:9-10 “⁹Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, ¹⁰declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.”

- Prophecy is one of the strongest proofs that the Bible is actually God's Word. God has shown and declared things to us in the scriptures long before they actually happened.

Isaiah 42:9 “Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.”

V: 19-20 Here he uses the phrase “*my sentence...*” but in V: 28 we see who is really guiding and directing this gathering and the understanding that comes from it.

Acts 15:28 “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us...”

- They boiled it down to some very basic things:

1. They determined not to trouble the Gentiles that had turned to God, they purposed not to make it any harder or more difficult for them - and we should purpose to do the same.

- The Gentile believers in Antioch had been taught:

Ephesians 2:8-9 “⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

- They were all rejoicing that the Lord had opened the door for the Gentiles to become part of God’s family, to share in His kingdom - and now these outsiders had come in trying to put the Law on the them - but the church leadership, led by the Holy Spirit have now affirmed the doctrine of grace and Paul’s teachings.

2. They’re to abstain or keep away from idols. (Idol worship)

3. They’re to abstain or keep from fornication, sexual relations outside of marriage.

- Prior to Christianity, fornication or sexual immorality was very common and accepted amongst the Gentiles. But Christianity prohibited fornication and brought faithfulness to the marriage vows, reinforcing the marriage vow.

4. They’re not to eat things that have been strangled because when animals die that way the blood is still in them.

Leviticus 17:11 “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”

- In those days the pagans would take their sacrifices to their perspective temples where they would offer their meat to their idols. Similar to Jewish sacrifices, part would be burnt on an altar, part would be given to the priest, and the remainder would be given back to the worshipper to eat or sell in the market place.
- Furthermore, for the most part the Jews were the only ones who bled out the animals before they were slaughtered.
- One of the issues for the early church was to try to get the two sides closer together and not have a Jewish church and a Gentile church. The suggestion about food preparation and blood wasn’t about righteousness, not eating meat sacrificed to idols didn’t make anyone holier, it was about unity.
- The prohibition about consuming blood actually pre-dates the Law.

Genesis 9:3-4 “³Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. ⁴But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.”

Again, the real issue is that of unity: Paul later wrote:

1 Corinthians 10:25-32 (Turn to / read)

V: 21 This message was primarily to the Gentiles in the church, these were new concepts to them. They didn't need to tell the Jews because the Jews that had converted to Christianity had been well aware of these things, they'd been listening to Moses being preached in the synagogues for a long time.

Paul later writes:

Romans 3:28-31 “²⁸Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law. ²⁹Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. ³¹Do we then make void the Law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the Law.”

Jesus said:

Matthew 5:17 “Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”

- There are parts of the Law that are fulfilled and in a sense done away with; like the sacrifice for sins - because Jesus is the sacrifice, and He is sufficient, He fulfilled every part of that. Jesus is the Sabbath, we don't limit Him to a specific day - every day He is our Sabbath.
- Jesus has fulfilled all the work requirements of the Law, there is nothing left for us to do.
- As much as He came to fulfill, He did. At the same time the Law is not destroyed, (**Matthew 5:17**) there are parts that in a practical sense are still in effect:
- Look at the 10 commandments as an example: **Exodus 20:2-17**
 1. I AM the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods before Me. (Still in effect!)
 2. Don't make any graven image or likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, the earth beneath, or the water under the earth. (Abstain from idols)
 3. Do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
- The fourth commandment about the Sabbath has been directly dealt with in the New Testament by Jesus Himself, by Peter and Paul's writings.

- That is the key, there are parts of the Law that are either affirmed in the NT, or they are fulfilled and completed, and they are no longer applicable based on what Jesus said or what we're taught in the epistles.
- But the parts that are affirmed in the New Testament like honoring your father and mother, not committing murder or adultery, not stealing, lying, or coveting - these are all still very much in effect as they are very much reiterated in the New Testament.

Matthew 5:17 “Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”

V: 22-23 So the church and its leadership determined not to burden the Gentile believers more than was necessary with these minimal things, certainly not going to hold them accountable to the requirement of the Law - and it pleased the apostles, the elders and the church generally - there was unity within the body.

James 3:17 “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”

- The church in Jerusalem sent men with Paul & Barnabas to testify to these things to the church in Antioch, and presumably the churches along the way - reassuring them of the doctrine of Grace.
- You can readily see that the Holy Spirit was guiding all of this, breaking down the walls of separation. The Jewish believers in Jerusalem called the Gentile believers “brethren” or “brothers,” acknowledging that they were all one and the same.

Galatians 3:28 “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

V: 24-27 We've heard that some un-authorized men went out from among us and troubled you, misleading your hearts regarding the Law - and just to be clear we didn't send them or tell them to say that.

“²⁵being assembled with one accord...” 2nd mention, V: 22. Unity of the Spirit, the leading and guiding of the Spirit brings that unity.

A very frequent question is “how can I know the will of God for my life?”

- The letter written to the church at Antioch stated that the believers in Jerusalem were in “*one accord*.” That's so important.

- Whether you're wrestling with an issue of lifestyle or doctrine, find out what the church says about it. Throughout church history, what has been the stance of the church regarding the subject with which you're struggling?
- Beware of those who say, "You don't need the church. It's outdated and old-fashioned."

Proverbs 22:28 "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set."

- It is often through the wisdom of church unanimity presently and historically that God has guided His people.

- We've sent these trusted emissaries to communicate our heart, and the truth to you. They are also affirming the ministry of Paul and Barnabas, calling them beloved, recognizing the legitimacy of their ministry, testifying to their faith.

Proverbs 25:13 "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters."

- He's describing a cool breeze on a hot day - that's what a faithful messenger is to his master.
- It was smart to send these other men along to communicate the message from the leaders in Jerusalem, to send them along with Paul and Barnabas. That way no one could accuse Paul of forging a letter or misstating the decision.

Another clue on how to know God's will for your life:

- God often guides through gifted men and women in the Body of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-12 "11And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

- God gave to the church prophets, pastors, evangelists, and teachers for the perfecting of the saints and the work of the ministry.
- How can you know God's will? Take advantage of whenever prophets, pastors, evangelists, or teachers expound the Word.
- It's the wise man or woman, who approaches every Bible study, every time of fellowship expecting the Lord to speak through His servants.

V: 28 As they had gathered in Jerusalem to address this divisive issue, no doubt they talked at length, and prayed, seeking God's will, His direction.

- They recognized the place of the Holy Spirit in guiding them - first thing mentioned - "... *it seemed good to the Holy Spirit.*" Then secondly, it seemed good "*to us.*" We see the unity that only the Holy Spirit can produce.

Paul described this:

Ephesians 4:3 "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

- Unity comes through the leading of the Holy Spirit. If there are disputes within the church, the first question should be "what does God say?" It's His church!

Another way how to know God's will for your life: God Guides us through the Gifts of the Spirit

- Earlier in this chapter, there was much debate and discussion. Then James stood up, and spoke a word of Wisdom. In so doing an interesting thing happened. Everyone in the room melted into unity and agreement.
- The same is true for us. There are times when, during an endless dialogue or discussion, someone suddenly says something that is truly from God and it settles the issue not only your mind, but deep within your heart—and you know it's the Lord, speaking through a word of wisdom.
- This is one of the ways that the Lord reveals His will to us.

- So we've written to you, not to burden you, but to protect you by keeping these necessary things:

Matthew 11:28-30 "28Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

V: 29 "**Abstain**" - to keep one self from, to refrain, to exercise self control or self restraint.

- It's worded a little differently, but its the same basic list as earlier:
 1. Abstain from meats sacrificed or offered to idols.
 2. Abstain from consuming blood, from things strangled.
 3. Abstain from fornication - sexual immorality.
- **Compromise is not always wrong, here it is used to glorify God and unify the church.**
- So they ended their letter by telling them "If you keep yourselves from these things then you're doing pretty good. Fare thee well."



V: 30 So after all the discussion about the keeping of the Law and how that relates to the grace of God by which we're saved and coming to a final determination about specifically what to say, what to tell these new Gentile believers - which is what we read in verse 29:

Acts 15:29 "That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well."

- (MAP) So they settled all of this and dismissed Paul & company to go back to **Antioch** to share this understanding with the church that had been affected there.
- Once there they gathered everybody and shared the outcome with them.

V: 31 Once they heard it, again there is rejoicing in the church, they rejoiced for the "consolation."

- Very understandable that they'd be rejoicing at not having to be circumcised... not having to keep the Law.
- This affirms that like them we too can relate to God through His grace as opposed to the Law and our performance of it.

Isaiah 49:13 "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted."

- **Consolation:** (G3874) paráklēsis; The act of exhortation, encouragement, comfort. All of Scripture is actually a paráklēsis, an exhortation, admonition or encouragement for the purpose of strengthening and establishing the believer in the faith.
- The word paraklesis is very close to the word "Parakeltos" speaking of "The Comforter" the Holy Spirit. This comfort, this encouragement is definitely a work of the Holy Spirit in bringing unity to the body of Christ.

V: 32 A further moving of the Spirit in their midst - Judas and Silas who were identified as prophets begin to exercise those gifts and prophesy, exhorting, encouraging the brethren, and "confirming" them.

Romans 12 and **1 Corinthians 12** both describe the various giftings of the Spirit, prophesy being among them.

- The purpose of prophesy is the edification of the body, whether it's the foretelling of God's Word in a futuristic sense - which has already greatly edified the body of

Christ. Or whether it's the forth-telling of God's Word, the speaking forth of the Word of God - which increases the faith of the brethren. Judas and Silas are exercising the gifts that they's been given, all to the glory of God.

- **Confirmed:** (G1991) epistērízō; to strengthen, support. Literally, to place firmly upon, to confirm, establish.

Peter exhorts us to the same thing:

2 Peter 1:10 "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if we do these things, ye shall never fall."

V: 33-34 So after they'd been there a while those that came from Jerusalem along with Paul and Barnabas departed back to the Apostles, to the church in Jerusalem, except that Silas stayed behind to continue ministering in Antioch.

- I kind of assume that Silas was probably a single man, that he didn't need to get back to Jerusalem to take care of his family, that he was free to go and do whatever and wherever the Lord would lead him.

1 Corinthians 7:32-33 "³²But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: ³³But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife."

V: 35 Paul and Barnabas also stayed put for a season, teaching and preaching the Word of God.

- Teaching and preaching are sometimes viewed as somewhat synonymous terms but they are in fact two distinct things.

1. **Preaching:** herald, evangelistic, leading people to the Lord. (Repent for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.)

- Preaching is to the un-converted, preaching is proclaiming the Gospel to those that need to be saved.

Romans 10:13-14 "¹³For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"

2. **Teaching:** being grounded in the Word, learning & understanding doctrine – being brought to maturity in the Lord.

- Once a person is saved they no longer need preaching per se, now they need teaching whereby they may grow.
- Too many churches are preaching to the saints who never grow out of infancy into maturity as believers.

Hebrews 5:12 - 6:2 “¹²For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. ¹³For everyone that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. ¹⁴But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. ^{6:1}Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection (maturity); not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, ²of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”

- Conversion comes through the preaching of the Gospel, but growth comes through the teaching of the Word.

1 Corinthians 13:11 “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “¹⁶All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷That the man of God may be perfect (complete, mature), thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

“... *teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord...*”

- There are men who are excellent teachers, and great preachers, but unless its the Word of God that they're teaching and preaching then it's all in vain!

Romans 10:17 “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

- It's the Word of God that changes men's lives, not People magazine, or pop culture, or even books on Christian living - the Word of God!

Psalms 119:105 “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”

V: 36 There is a time gap between verses 35 & 36, we don't know how long for sure.

- After a while they determined to go back to the churches they had planted on their previous mission trip and check up on them to see how they were doing - a spiritual check up of sorts.

- That's good for churches and it's good for people. How are we doing in the Lord, what's He speaking to us, how are our devotions going, are we spending time with Him in prayer and worship? What's our spiritual temperature.

1 Corinthians 11:31 "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."

Psalm 139:23-24 ²³Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

- As far as the churches; it's kind of like leading someone to the Lord; then checking back with them, following up to see if they are still walking with the Lord, and encouraging them in their walk, strengthening them.
- Paul had a heart for the people he had reached on his first missionary trip, and he wanted to make sure they were growing, and healthy.
- We know that Paul kept in touch with these churches by writing them letters, like the letter to the churches of Galatia.
- Mailing a letter back then was not at all like it is today. First, there was no postal service, letters were sent by messengers or couriers, it would take weeks or months to receive a letter. But also it's hard to convey your concern, your tone, your heart the way you'd want to. Nothing quite replaces personal contact, face to face.

Galatians 4:19-20 ¹⁹My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, ²⁰I desire to be present with you, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you."

- "I really want to be with you, so you can hear the tone of my voice, because I'm worried about you..."
- So in his mind it's time, he wants to go see them personally.

V: 37-41 Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them, and Paul didn't want to bring him because he'd left them in Pamphylia the last time.

- They had quite a difference about it that they decided to split up.
- There are times when God fearing, Bible believing Christians are going to differ on things - that's not the end of the world. Sometimes we have to be able to agree to disagree, agreeably!

Romans 12:18 “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

- “In the essentials unity, in the non-essentials liberty, in all things love!”
- Often times these differences and difficulties are opportunities to grow in the Lord.

Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

- God uses it for His purposes, now they have two mission teams, covering two different areas. Barnabas took John Mark, his nephew to Cyprus - home territory to Barnabas and ministered to the churches and believers there.
- Paul took Silas, with whom it would appear that he'd hit it off with pretty well
- This breach was only temporary. Later when Paul was imprisoned in Rome he wrote to Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:11 “Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”

- This all sets the stage for Paul's second missionary trip which begins in Chapter 16 next week.