

THE
ACTS
CHURCH



Acts 15:22-35-The Council's Letter to Gentile Believers

²² Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, men who were leaders among the believers. ²³ With them they sent the following letter: The apostles and elders, your brothers,

To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia:

Greetings.

²⁴ We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. ²⁵ So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul— ²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. ²⁸ It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: ²⁹ You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.

Farewell.

³⁰ So the men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. ³¹ The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. ³² Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers. ³³ After spending some time there, they were sent off by the believers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them. ³⁴ [a] ³⁵ But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord.

Review 15:22-35.

- Today's passage picks up with the results of the Jerusalem Council's decision. They wrote a letter explaining their findings and sent chosen men to accompany that letter.
- ❖ Who was sent in addition to Paul and Barnabas?
- This may seem like a small detail at first. But note their mention, because in today's passage, we will see another example of God's incredible sovereignty in the details. We will see the way God provides in advance *for* His people and *with* His people.
- The letter explained their decision "*not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements.*"
- ❖ What were they? And what was at the heart behind choosing these four? (Refer to the end of our previous Scripture reading, if needed).
- The four men took the requirements to Syrian Antioch first.
- ❖ What was the response of the church in Antioch?
- ❖ **True or False:** As soon as they read the letter, Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas immediately left for the next location. Explain your answer.

Acts 15:36-41

Disagreement Between Paul and Barnabas

³⁶ Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.” ³⁷ Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, ³⁸ but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. ³⁹ They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹ He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Review 15:36-41.

- Here, we see a model of the early church growing and strengthening. Throughout Acts, Luke describes staggering numbers of people coming to faith. The gospel spread fulfilling Jesus's words in **1:8**: *"You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*
- And yet, amid all this numerical and geographical growth, Paul basically said to Barnabas, *"Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing."*
- Though God's multiplication of the number of believers in this time was miraculous and stunning, Paul was not just about seeing how many people could come to faith. There was a clear emphasis on investing in these communities where the seed of faith had been planted, to teach and encourage the new believers to become strong and faithful people of depth, to tend that growth.
- ❖ Why did Barnabas want to take John Mark? Why did Paul object?
- ❖ In what ways did the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas both challenge their relationship and ultimately contribute to the spread of the gospel?
- ❖ Why is it important that Paul later recognized Mark as valuable for ministry in **2 Timothy 4:11**?
- ❖ How should conflict in ministry be handled?
- ❖ Are you more like Paul or Barnabas?

Review 15:36-41.

- God used even the pain of human disagreement between Paul and Barnabas to continue and expand His mission. What looked like a breakdown in partnership became a redirection of ministry, as both leaders were given new partners and new opportunities for fellowship and service. Instead of one missionary team, there were now two, effectively doubling the places where the gospel was being shared and churches were being strengthened.
- This passage reminds us that God can bring good out of even difficult and imperfect situations. What appears to be division can become multiplication in His hands.
- At the same time, Scripture warns us that the enemy often uses conflict to discourage believers—tempting them to believe they are disqualified, unusable, or too damaged to continue serving the Lord. Yet this passage shows that disagreement does not cancel calling, and failure or tension does not end usefulness in God’s kingdom.
- Even through conflict, God continues His work of building His church and advancing the gospel.
- ❖ What stood out to you most in this week’s study? Why?