

ACTS 15:22-35

A. Acts 15:22 - Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

1. It pleased the apostles, church elders, and the whole church at Jerusalem to send to the Gentiles a message that said two things:
 - a. They were not going to put the Gentiles under the Law. They understood that God was dealing with Gentiles differently - there's a change happening.
 - b. They asked the Gentiles to be careful about their testimony because they should not want Israel to stumble and remain lost.
2. The decision caused the Little Flock and new Body of believers to come together in agreement with James' conclusion. To help ensure this decision, the Jerusalem church sent a committee of men, along with Barnabas, Titus, and Paul, back to the Antioch church.
 - a. *These Jewish men would testify of their leaders' final verdict on the issue and, being who they were, they would be greatly respected (Judas and Silas).
 - b. Also, they would send a letter from Jerusalem's church leaders of their decision. The letter would testify of their total support of Paul's apostleship and ministry to the Gentiles through the gospel of grace. They did this, even though they didn't fully understand all of it.
3. This council decision was a great victory for believers that were from both dispensations, Israel's and the Body's. This agreement helped (whether they understood it or not) to bring about the change-transition from the Dispensation of Law to the advancing of the Dispensation of Grace.
4. Also, do not forget that this council had no jurisdiction over the Antioch church. That means neither the 11, James, or the elders had any authority or power over the new dispensation or Paul. But they were to be respected.

Romans 9:4-5 - Who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Rom. 9:5 Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Romans 3:1-2 - What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision? Rom. 3:2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

B. The Letter from the Jerusalem Church Leaders to Antioch's Church of Gentile Believers.

Acts 15:23-29 - And they wrote *letters* by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren *send* greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: 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: Acts 15:25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, Acts 15:26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 15:27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell *you* the same things by mouth. Acts 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; 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.

1. In vs. 23-24, they made it clear that those Jews who entered their church and homes, trying to put them under Israel's program, were **not** sent by them! What they did was a **mistake**. They didn't know any better and we are sorry for the confusion.
2. In vs. 25-27, they gave their confirmation again of Paul and Barnabas, calling them [beloved]. They gave testimony to them for putting their **lives on the line for Christ**. To seal their decision, they **not only** sent a letter from themselves, **but also** sent two eye witnesses of the whole meeting - Judas and Silas. They were to verbally share the truth of the council meeting. Judas and Silas were prophets (vs. 32). They were going to communicate through their prophetic gift the **same** truth that the letter stated.

Those leaders at Jerusalem were doing everything they could to endorse the change in God's new program, to **validate that change among the Gentiles.

3. In vs. 28-29, we see that even though James in vs. 19 said [my sentence is], the agreement was not final until the Holy Spirit and the whole congregation had approved it.

- a. It is like what happened in Acts 4 when the Little Flock was **filled** with the Holy Spirit. They were of **one** accord.

*Our own maturity and spiritual life always determines the **unity**, or oneness, of the church.

- b. The things requested of the Gentiles were **not** things concerning their **salvation**, but things that could help their testimony.

*They were saying: "You guys are saved. You don't have to keep the Law - you don't have to be circumcised, and you don't have to do anything Jewish to be saved. But you need to walk in **agape love** toward those lost Jews out there and **not** be an offence to them."

Remember, at this time here, Israel was **diminishing. God is still working **with** them, but not **through** them.

Romans 11:12-13 - Now if the fall of them *be* the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? Rom. 11:13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

- c. There is a remnant out there that He wanted to be saved, according to the election of grace.

Romans 11:5 - Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

*So the Gentiles, who are saved, needed to be **sensitive** in order to be a testimony to perhaps the forthcoming Jewish remnant and already-believing Jews. They were not to be a stumbling block to them by their **inconsiderate** behavior. The Gentiles needed to be **sympathetic** toward the Jews, considering what had happened to them! That is an **understatement**!

4. Also again, these Jewish Kingdom believers have **accepted** the change. In vs. 22, it says [it pleased the apostles...elders..whole church]. They recognized the change and **embraced** it, as far as they understood it. They could **not** deny that God was doing this change. They loved God, **so** they obeyed His leading in all of this.

Proof:

Galatians 2:7-9 - But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter; Gal. 2:8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles;) Gal. 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.

a. Paul is saying that, at this council, the Jewish brethren and Gentile brethren came to a public **agreement** that the Jews would stay with the Jews, and Paul's mystery ministry would go to the heathen.

b. Remember: Matthew 16:15-19 - He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Matt. 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Matt. 16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. Matt. 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matt. 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

*Peter especially, with the others, was given the authority to act in place of Christ, in His **absence**. Whatever he would bind on earth would be bound in heaven; whatever he would loose on earth would be loosed in heaven.

c. Matthew 18:28-20 - Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Matt. 18:19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. Matt. 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

*This is **not** a prayer promise as it usually is used by **most**. They say if you agree with someone in prayer, you will get your prayer request. But the context is the binding-loosening of something by the apostles-leaders in Israel's program, because of Christ's absence.

* Christ is up there in heaven, but He leaves the Little Flock down here with the apostles. Peter
* is the leader of them, and Christ leaves them with the authority to **act** in His name while He
* is gone. When Peter, by himself, or two or three others got together to decide on a spiritual
* matter, this number constituted a **quorum** to do business or official action in the name of Christ.
* When they took that action, it was **recognized** in heaven as being what heaven would have
* done.

d. Understanding that is important when we interpret Galatians 2:7-9. The loosening from their Great Commission was not only done by Peter and two or three, but the whole Little Flock Jerusalem Church made this agreement with apostle Paul! They just put that commission (Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16:16-20; Acts 1:8) on the **shelf** by apostolic authority. This Jerusalem church loosed themselves from the Great Commission **temporarily**. Again, Acts 15 confirms the change that was taking place and endorsed Paul's new ministry.

5. The two main decisions this Acts 15 council made were: ❶ They recognized Paul's **new** ministry and Paul's apostolic authority; ❷ They agreed that the Gentiles would **not** be put under Israel's Law-Kingdom-Prophetic Program.

- a. Note: It seems that every church council **after** this one in Acts 15 has **repudiated** those two decisions! The councils have denied Paul's **distinctive** ministry and have made Israel's promises-covenants be for the Church today. They stick Israel's program onto the Gentiles, causing great **confusion** and **divisions** (vs. 24).
- b. Galatians 1:6-7 - I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Gal. 1:7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

*This mixing was disturbing their Gentile **minds**, challenging what they believed and perverting the true gospel. When it says [subverting your souls], that means to **undermine** one's faith, to overthrow it, to destroy something by turning it upside down. The satanic policy behind false doctrine is to trouble one with **words**. False doctrine works **inside** a person.

- c. II Timothy 2:14-15, 18 - Of these things put *them* in remembrance, charging *them* before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, *but* to the subverting of the hearers. 2Tim. 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2Tim. 2:18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

Paul fought this all the time (us?**).

Galatians 3:1 - O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

C.

Acts 15:30-35 - So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: Acts 15:31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. Acts 15:32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed *them*. Acts 15:33 And after they had tarried *there* a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. Acts 15:34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still. Acts 15:35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

- 1. After the church council's decision, certain delegates traveled to Antioch's church and gathered all the believers together. They read the letter to them, in which Jerusalem's Church confirmed that the Law and circumcision were **not** to be placed upon them - especially not for **salvation**.
- 2. No doubt, haste was made because of the wonderful news. The letter, being read, caused great **relief** and joy among the Gentile believers. Since Silas and Judas were prophets (temporary), this showed that the Kingdom program transition to the Mystery Body's program **was not** complete **yet** (it would be by Acts 28). The Antioch church needed this prophetic confirmation because they were in the **midst** of the transition.

Remember: They were at this time [we know in part] and did not have God's **completed** revelation (Scripture).

3. Bishop says: "An overlapping of the former and present dispensations took place as some years elapsed before the dispensation of grace took its normal course."
4. After fulfilling their mission, Judas goes back to Jerusalem, but Silas decides to remain at Antioch. (We will see that this was a God thing.) Paul and Barnabas continued teaching the Word concerning the Body's doctrine, the Gospel of Grace. For the present at least, the Judaizers' mixing of programs (law and grace) had stopped.
5. More than likely, this is when Peter makes his visit to Antioch himself. It seems that Peter's visit happens after the council's meeting, yet before Paul and Barnabas separate!