

Acts of the Apostles

14:21-15:36

The return to Antioch in Syria

After they had proclaimed the good news to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, then on to Iconium and Antioch.²² There they strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying,

"It is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God."

²³ And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.²⁴ Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia.²⁵ When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.²⁶ From there they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had completed.²⁷ When they arrived, they called the church together and related all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles.²⁸ And they stayed there with the disciples for some time.

The issue

Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."² And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders.

The Council at Jerusalem

³ So they were sent on their way by the church, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the believers.

⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them.

⁵ But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, "It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses."

⁶ The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter.⁷ After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them,

"My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers.⁸ And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us;⁹ and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us.¹⁰ Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear?¹¹ On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

¹²The whole assembly kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles.

¹³After they finished speaking, James replied,

"My brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴Simeon has related how God first looked favorably on the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name. ¹⁵This agrees with the words of the prophets, as it is written, ¹⁶'After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; from its ruins I will rebuild it, and I will set it up, ¹⁷so that all other peoples may seek the Lord-- even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called. Thus says the Lord, who has been making these things ¹⁸known from long ago.' ¹⁹Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, ²⁰but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood. ²¹For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every sabbath in the synagogues."

The Council's letter to the Gentiles

²²Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, decided to choose men from among their members and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers, ²³with the following letter:

"The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the believers of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. ²⁴Since we have heard that certain persons who have gone out from us, though with no instructions from us, have said things to disturb you and have unsettled your minds, ²⁵we have decided unanimously to choose representatives and send them to you, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. ²⁸For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: ²⁹that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."

³⁰So they were sent off and went down to Antioch. When they gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. ³¹When its members read it, they rejoiced at the exhortation. ³²Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers. ³³After they had been there for some time, they were sent off in peace by the believers to those who had sent them. ³⁴ ³⁵But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, and there, with many others, they taught and proclaimed the word of the Lord.

³⁶After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Come, let us return and visit the believers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are doing."