

¹ And certain *men* came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

² Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.

Many connect this to **Galatians 2:1-10**

Acts 15:2 (NIV) This brought Paul and Barnabas into **sharp dispute** and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.

Many have grossly misinterpreted this incident. Paul and Barnabas did not go to Jerusalem to learn the truth from the apostles there. They knew the truth when they went. Paul was an apostle who knew the truth through God's direct revelation to him; he did not depend on instruction from other apostles (Gal. 1:11-12; 1st Cor. 2:12-13). Nor was this a conference comparable to those in which delegates meet to make decisions on various issues and determine the policies that are to govern churches. Paul and Barnabas did not go to Jerusalem in order reach a policy decision through discussion with others; they went and presented the truth that they already knew. Hence, the letter written as a result of the conference was not the result of mere human deliberations; it was the result of the Spirit's guidance (v.28).

Acts --- Johnny Stringer Truth Commentaries pg. 299-300

³ So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren.

⁴ And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.

⁵ But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses."

⁶ Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.

⁷ And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

Cornelius = **Acts 10:1-48** (Cornelius, his relatives and close friends - **Acts 10:24**)

⁸ So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as *He did* to us,

⁹ and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

Remember **Romans 10:17, Romans 1:16, Acts 11:14, 1st Peter 1:22-25 & Romans 16:26**

¹⁰ Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

¹¹ But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

¹² Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.

¹³ And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men *and* brethren, listen to me:

¹⁴ Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.

¹⁵ And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:

See: **Amos 9:11-12**

¹⁶ *'After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up;*

¹⁷ *'So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the Lord who does all these things.'*

¹⁸ Known to God from eternity are all His works.

¹⁹ Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,

²⁰ but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, *from* sexual immorality, *from* things strangled, and *from* blood.

The four things from which James proposed that the gentiles should be required to abstain had been made unlawful, not by the Mosaic law, but by the revelations of the patriarchal age. From the beginning it had been known to the patriarchs that it was sinful to have any responsible connection with idols, or to indulge in fornication; and from the time of the law given to the race in the family of Noah, eating blood, and consequently eating things strangled which retained their blood within them, had been wrong, and it will continue to be until the end of the world.' So, in regard to the question at issue, whether the Gentile disciples must observe the law of Moses, James' proposal that "we trouble them not," was fully carried out by imposing nothing on them that was peculiar to the law.

Commentary on Acts --- J.W. McGarvey pg. (Part Third – pg.66-67)

²¹ "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

The following explanation, suggested to me by David McClister, is the one I find most satisfactory. The fact that the Law of Moses was being taught in every city was not the reason for the commands of verse 20; rather, it was the reason for the publishing of these commands. These commands needed to be published in view of the Jewish attitudes. The Jews thought that to be free from the Law of Moses meant to be free from all law. Hence, they believed that if the Gentiles were not bound by the Law of Moses, they would be free to engage in every kind of pagan immorality. The letter would make it clear that this was not the case. Since there was a synagogue in "every city" (generally), this clarification was needed in every city. As the gospel was preached to the Jews and as they were converted to Christ, they would need to understand that the abolition of the Law of Moses did not give men the license to live as the heathen did. The publication of this letter would make this clear.

Acts --- Johnny Stringer Truth Commentaries pg. 310-311

James now gives a reason why there was a need to write to the Gentiles only and not the Jewish Christians. The Jews had been taught by the Law against Idolatry. It was read to them every Sabbath. They already had consciences directed against idolatrous practices. But before obeying the gospel, the Gentiles had never been taught that these were sinful. Thus Gentiles needed this specific warning from the apostles and elders whereas the Jews already knew.

Acts Book 2 by Robert Harkrider pg. 26

²² Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, *namely*, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

²³ They wrote this *letter* by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings.

²⁴ Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "*You must* be circumcised and keep the law"--to whom we gave no *such* commandment—

²⁵ it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁷ We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth.

²⁸ For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:

For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us,-- Here the authority of the Holy Spirit accompanies the decision written in the letter. This showed that the decision reached was the will of God, and that those who so expressed themselves were expressing the will of God. The decision was not merely man's decision or opinion, but was the inspired will of God. No burden was to be placed upon the Gentile Christians other than what the Holy Spirit placed upon them. Only such "necessary things" were required by the Holy Spirit. The restrictions named did constitute some burden, but it was necessary for their salvation. Some think that these "necessary things" were only "necessary" for the times in which they lived, but are not necessary for Christians today; however, it seems that these things are as necessary today as they were at that time.

A Commentary on Acts of The Apostles by H. Leo Boles pg. 244

²⁹ that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

³⁰ So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.

³¹ When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement.

³² Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words.

³³ And after they had stayed *there* for a time, they were sent back with greetings from the brethren to the apostles.

³⁴ However, it seemed good to Silas to remain there.

³⁵ Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

³⁶ Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they are doing."

³⁷ Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark.

³⁸ But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work.

³⁹ Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus;

⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God.

⁴¹ And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Questions Acts 15

1. Who came to Antioch and taught that circumcision was necessary to be saved?
2. How did Paul and Barnabas respond to those who were teaching the need for circumcision
3. Which verse teaches that those who wanted to bind circumcision also wanted the gentiles to keep the Law of Moses?
4. What section of the **book of Galatians** do some attribute to the event of the meeting in Jerusalem?

Questions Acts 15

5. Who does Peter use to refute the need for circumcision?
6. Where does it state, *“And made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.”*
 - a. How would you use **Romans 10:17, Romans 1:16, Acts 11:14, 1st Peter 1:22-25 & Romans 16:26** to explain the phrase *“purifying their hearts by faith”*?
7. List 4 things that the gentiles were to abstain from.
8. What are two different explanations given concerning verse 21?
9. How does H. Leo Boles explain verse 28?
10. Where does it state, *“When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement”*?
 - a. Who is being spoken of and what matter was being addressed?
11. Why was there a sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas and how was the matter resolved?
12. List the point or points you will choose to remember from this chapter.

