

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 27TH–28TH, 2026 // THE BOOK OF ACTS

### THE LETTER (ACTS 15:22–29)

#### THE CARRIERS

Letter carriers were very important in biblical times. They often had the responsibility of reading and interpreting the contents for the people. Judas and Silas were chosen to go with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch with the letter.

- **Our character backs up and gives credibility to the content of our words.**

#### LEADING MEN

Judas and Silas were leaders of the church in Jerusalem. In v. 32, they are called prophets. They were also in agreement with James and the church concerning the issue of the Gentiles.

- Leaders are gifted by God, recognized by the people, and seek unity over non-essential issues that could divide.

#### “DEARLY LOVED BARNABAS AND PAUL”

Barnabas, the Son of Encouragement, was a fixture in the Jerusalem church. Paul had to grow on them but was eventually fully trusted. Both willingly risked their lives for Jesus.

- Paul and Barnabas taught that it was necessary to go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God. **They modeled it.**

#### THE CONTENT OF THE LETTER

The letter makes it clear that those who had come demanding the Gentiles convert to Judaism had done so without authorization. **The gospel is the good news of all Jesus has done through the cross and His resurrection. Our response is to repent and believe. Nothing else will be added to the gospel.**

- To confirm the simplicity of the gospel, the church unanimously sent Judas and Silas to affirm what the letter said. The Holy Spirit was the ultimate decision-maker on this issue, and the people affirmed it. Abstaining from practices vile to the Jews wasn't capitulation but maturity, protecting the unity of the multi-ethnic church.

#### CULTURE AND ETHNICITY ARE GOD'S IDEAS

The early church affirmed the beauty of God's creative work through culture and ethnicity. Are there practices in cultures that displease God? Yes, and these must be discarded.

**But God saves all who trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, no matter their skin color or unique cultural distinctives.**

#### GOOD NEWS (ACTS 15:30–35)

##### RELIEF

For the Gentile Christians, these must have been days of uncertainty and confusion. Thanks to the content of the letter, clarity was given and rejoicing ensued. Why? The Church was affirmed as a New Covenant creation, made up of any who are in Jesus, with no one ethnic group claiming supremacy. **Only Jesus is supreme!**

#### WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

Christian Jews from Jerusalem had created the chaos concerning Gentile converts. Now Judas and Silas (Christian Jews from Jerusalem, who were also known prophets) brought all the authority of the church with them as they grounded the people in the gospel.

- **Jesus brings freedom, not bondage.**

#### ALL ARE CALLED TO GO, SOME TO GO AND STAY

God has determined that some leaders stay in a place for a season, then they move on to other places. Judas and Silas stayed for a while, then went back to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas remained longer but would leave soon.

- **Our common focus is on Jesus and His Word which always remains, not people.**

#### THE RHYTHM OF A DISCIPLE

Paul, Barnabas, and many others were teaching and proclaiming. They were discipling new converts and Believers (teaching) and evangelizing the lost (proclaiming).

- **All Christians, not just pastors, are called to the beautiful work of evangelizing and discipling. It's not “should we?” but “will we?”**

#### DISAGREEMENT (ACTS 15:36–41)

##### CHECKING IN ON...

A father cares for his kids. Paul wanted to check in on their spiritual “children” from their first missionary trip. The best way was for him and Barnabas to travel to those cities.

- **While we want our spiritual children to grow up, we should still check in on them from time to time as spiritual parents.**

#### THE SCHISM OVER JOHN MARK

Barnabas was in agreement over their next trip and wanted to take John Mark. Paul didn't want Mark to go since he had deserted them on the first missionary trip (13:13). A “sharp disagreement” ensued, with the result being that one missionary team became two.

- **Even godly Christians will disagree.**

#### GOD WORKS THROUGH HUMAN WEAKNESSES

Barnabas took Mark west to the island of Cyprus. Paul chose Silas and headed north through Syria and on to Cilicia (Paul's home territory) with the church's affirmation.

- Jesus wants His church to dwell in unity. **Even when the church fails to do so, if people remain humble, God can use them.**

#### DON'T GET THE GOSPEL WRONG

- When the church unites **under the biblical Jesus Christ**, focuses on **majors and not minors**, doesn't require **non-essentials for salvation**, and **preaches the gospel to all who will listen**, that is when **the power of Christ to save is on display**.
- Jesus is **the root**; our works **are the fruit**.

#### DON'T GET THE CHURCH WRONG

- The church isn't meant to be a **segregated group divided by ethnicities, power, money, education, insider language, or any other way we identify, label, and ostracize people**.
- We are a beautiful preview of the Kingdom.
- We **proclaim** the good news, we **teach** the disciples, and we do this **until Jesus comes**.

#### DON'T GET UNITY WRONG

- Unity isn't the same as uniformity. We will disagree sometimes and maybe even separate if we can't work it out. **Our enemy isn't our brother or sister in Jesus**. It's the thief who wants to steal, kill, and destroy.
- Remember, on the new earth we will greet one another as dear friends in Jesus.

#### IT'S NOT HOW WE START BUT HOW WE FINISH

- John Mark started off weak and unable to bear up under the pressure of ministry.
- Paul, at first, saw no reason to risk Mark's possible desertion again.
- When Paul was close to martyrdom, he told Timothy to bring Mark with him because “he is **useful to me in the ministry**” (2 Timothy 4:11).