

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 28TH, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

IT'S SETTLED (ACTS 15:22-29)

GOING BACK WHERE THE DISPUTE BEGAN

The Jerusalem counsel met and agreed that the Gentiles who were coming to faith in Jesus were not required to observe Jewish customs and rituals, though they were expected to operate in a way that did not cause offense.

- They sent a letter and two men with Paul and Barnabas to communicate this decision with the Gentile Christians in Antioch.

"BOTH LEADING MEN AMONG THE BROTHERS"

Judas, called **Barsabbas**, would return to Jerusalem after their mission in Antioch. He is believed to be the brother of Joseph Barsabbas (Justus), who was nominated to replace Judas Iscariot as the twelfth apostle.

- **Silas**, or **Silvanus** (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:19), was a scribe with Roman citizenship. He accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey.

"SELECT MEN WHO WERE AMONG THEM"

Both Judas Barsabbas and Silas were Jewish Christians and not Gentiles from Jerusalem.

- The Gentile Christians had heard the stance of the Judaizers in trying to place further burdens on them, but through Judas and Silas, they would hear from others that a consensus was reached.

ACKNOWLEDGE HIS PRESENCE

The letter stated that "it was the Holy Spirit's decision—and ours" (v. 28), meaning that the decision was made in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, almost in the sense that He was there in their deliberations.

- We need to recognize the need to bring the Holy Spirit into every decision we make in His Church.

"FAREWELL"

With the closing of the letter, the issue was settled and closed in the early church once and for all.

- We are saved by grace through faith, not by conforming to the law, observing customs, or practicing rituals. Once salvation is settled, then obedience comes as a result of true saving faith.

Not only did the Jerusalem Council settle the doctrinal discussion about salvation, but they also made a practical decision about how to live the Christian life.

- We are to avoid idolatry and immorality, and we should be willing to abstain from things that create stumbling blocks or disunity within the Body.

A WEIGHT LIFTED (ACTS 15:30-35)

"REJOICED BECAUSE OF ITS ENCOURAGEMENT"

They rejoiced that they did not have to carry the burdensome yoke of the law.

- The gift of salvation through Christ was something that the law could never give: "The law, then, was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith. But since that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian" (Galatians 3:24-25).

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW TODAY

If we are not under the law, is the law still necessary?

- The law is still necessary in the sense that it reveals our shortcomings and humanity's need for a Savior. Though we are not under ceremonial laws, the moral principles and heart behind them should guide us in our pursuit of loving God and our neighbors.

WHAT IT DOES NOT MEAN FOR US TODAY

Righteousness comes through faith in Jesus, meaning we are justified before God because of His completed work on the cross. Jesus fulfilled the law and established the New Covenant of grace (Matthew 5:17).

- We are free from the law and under God's grace, but that does not mean we are free to sin (Romans 6:14-15).

MORE ABOUT WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY DID

V. 32 tells us that Judas and Silas were "prophets" who "encouraged...and strengthened them with a long message."

- The OT and NT name 133 prophets, while numerous others prophesied. Prophets were tasked with speaking God's truth and were instrumental in guiding His people and establishing His Church (Ephesians 2:20)

"AFTER SPENDING SOME TIME THERE"

Judas and Silas stayed in Antioch, operating in the gift of prophecy and exhortation until being sent back in peace to Jerusalem, while Paul and Barnabas stayed back, teaching and proclaiming the word of the Lord.

- Even with a genuine effort at unity, we know from Paul's letters that this topic was far from settled in the minds of some Jewish Christians.

PARTING WAYS (ACTS 15:36-41)

"AFTER SOME TIME HAD PASSED"

While in Antioch, Paul told Barnabas he wanted to go back to the towns where churches were established and check on them.

- Paul had a heart for bringing people to faith and planting churches, but he also cared deeply about seeing people grow and mature in their faith.

PAUL AND BARNABAS DIVIDE

Whatever the reason was for John Mark deserting them on the first missionary journey (13:13), it caused Paul not to trust and not to want him on the second missionary journey.

- Barnabas wanted to bring John Mark with them and when Paul insisted that they should not, "They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company."

TWO MISSIONARY TEAMS SENT OUT

Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed to Cyprus, while Paul took Silas through Syria and Cilicia.

- Though this quarrel resulted in two missionary teams being sent out in different directions and covering more area, we are not to excuse the division but instead see God taking evil and turning it for good (Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28).

RECONCILIATION IN ROME

The point is not to know who was right and who was wrong in the dispute or the author would have been directed by Holy The Spirit to tell us.

- We do know that we are to live peaceably with everyone as much as it depends on us (Romans 12:18), and whatever caused the rift between these two, there was an attempt by Paul to reconcile in the end (2 Timothy 4:11).

SETTLED BY THE EARLY CHURCH

- The Jerusalem Counsel, in the early days of the church, settled that we are **saved by grace through faith** (Ephesians 2:8-10), we are to **avoid all idolatry and immorality**, and we should be willing to **make concessions and compromises** for unity within the Body.
- As individuals, we are to **pursue holiness** while **engaging in outward service** (James 1:7).

LESSONS FROM THE EARLY CHURCH

- The early church rejoiced because they did not have to carry the burdensome yoke of the law (Acts 15:30-31).
- What burdensome yoke are you carrying instead of experiencing freedom in Christ?
- Every problem and difference we face is an opportunity to grow as well as a temptation for dissension and division.

CONCESSIONS AND COMPROMISES

- The legalistic Jews willingly conceded on the idea that the Gentiles had to be circumcised to be saved.
- The Gentiles willingly accepted a change in their eating habits.
- We are to rely on the Holy Spirit to show us what concessions and compromises need to be made for unity within the body.