

## THE BOOK OF ACTS | GOD'S REVELATION OF TRANSITION

SESSION 50 | ACTS 15:28

### ACTS 15:21-34 | THE CONFRONTATION AT JERUSALEM: THE COMMUNICATION OF THE MATTER

- Verses 21-27 included on session 49
- Verse 28 –
  - These are **necessary things** and are from the **Holy Ghost**, not for salvation or sanctification, but for the purposes explained in v. 21.
  - These things are a **burden**, and the Christian life is not meant to be *burden-free*. The burdens laid upon us are not saving works but relate to honoring our Lord.
  - Christians should take care to only place **necessary things** as a burden on their lives, and not become weighted down with ecclesiastical burdens.
- Verse 29 –
  - The fourfold burden that was requested of the Gentiles is:
    - **Abstain from meats offered to idols.** The word **abstain** is from ἀπέχω [apecho], from *apo* and *echo*, which are “away from” and “to have,” respectively. The believers were asked to *stay away from having meat offered to idols* because doing so would be offensive to Jewish people. Later, Paul would warn about those who would command others to **abstain from meats** in general and denied that this should be done. Often believers will take one *sensibility* (as taught here) and exaggerate it into a *legalism* (as taught in 1 Timothy 4:3. Paul instructs believers about the *sensibility* of this issue of not eating meat offered to idols in 1 Corinthians 8:4-13.
    - **Abstain from...blood.** Under Torah law, blood was to be drained from meat before eating, as a symbol of the sanctity of life. See Leviticus 17:14.
    - **Abstain from...things strangled** - This is related to blood. When an animal is strangled, the blood is not drained. The life was removed in a manner that did not respect life.
    - **Abstain from ...fornication.** The word **fornication** is a general term for sexual immorality. However, it is difficult to know exactly what was in mind here. The Jews had stricter norms for things that may have been considered sexual than did the Gentiles. In 1 Corinthians 5:1 Paul spoke to Jewish believers about **such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles**, using the “looser” norms of the Gentiles for shock factor. “Even the Gentiles don’t do that!”
  - A few general remarks about these **burdens**.
    - Some argue that this shows that the law is in effect today. However, the very context is about the law *not* being in effect today. Note verse 24, some were saying **Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law**.
    - Many argue that the law is *ceremonial* or *moral*. Most of these would say the ceremonial law has been abolished and the moral law remains. But here, the ceremonial and the moral are combined.
    - Some ask, “if the Christians are just placating the Jews by not doing these things that are offensive, why not go ahead and be circumcised?” This fails to recognize that the circumcision was being taught as an issue of *salvation*. It also fails to recognize that circumcision is not something on public display. Finally, it fails to recognize that Paul *did* ask Timothy (the Jew) to be circumcised (Acts 16:1-3), so we know that *when it mattered, Paul did “placate” the Jews with circumcision*.
- Verses 30-31 –
  - In light of the joy seen, the gentiles clearly see this as vindication of Paul's message. The Jews were in no way requiring the obedience to Jewish Law, nor were they even requiring obedience to the four things mentioned but giving them in the spirit of mutual respect.

- The assembly at Antioch **rejoiced for the consolation**.
  - The English word **consolation** is translated from παράκλησις [paraklasis] (*coming alongside with a message*), and is from *con-solari*, “with solace.”
  - Thus we are affirmatively told that the Jewish believers in Messiah and the Gentile believers in individual salvation through Jesus Christ were in harmony as to their two *separate* messages, both being taught at the same time (see Gal. 2:7).
- Verse 32 –
  - The presence of church-age prophets has confused many, causing them to redefine a prophet as simply a teacher/exhorter. Allowing Scripture to interpret itself, no such redefinition is workable.
  - In this same chapter (v. 15), the word prophet clearly refers to Amos, and now, Judas and Silas are **prophets also themselves** [like unto Amos].
  - These are (as we learned in verse 22), Jewish men, and all prophets were Jews.
- Verses 33-34 –
  - Judas and Silas were **let go in peace** to return to the Apostles, but **it pleased Silas to abide there still**.
  - It is important to know that Silas chose to remain because in verse 40 Paul is going to choose Silas to go with him, and they will leave from Antioch. Without verse 34, verse 40 appears to leave out vital information. However, the versions of the Bible based on the Critical Text leave out verse 34.

## ACTS 15:35-41 | PROPOSAL FOR A SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

- Verses 35-36 –
  - Paul proposes the trip, after what appears to be a good ministry in Antioch. This is approximately 53AD.
  - The proposal is for Paul and Barnabas to go to the cities where they had previously seen converts and to **see how they do**.
- Verses 37-41 –
  - Sometimes two determined men can hit a roadblock, and that is what happened here. the *sharp contention* caused the team to separate.
  - Sometimes our Christian world is overly fearful of contention.
    - Should Paul and Barnabas have made some compromise?
    - Should they have had a Christian mediation team come to solve the matter?
    - Should they have cancelled the trip because there was not perfect harmony?
    - These are approaches we want to take today. However, it may be more advantageous to say, “You and I don’t see eye to eye, so why don’t we just do our work separately?”
  - After this, we have no further word of Barnabas (and should avoid “conclusions from silence”). However, we do know that Paul and Mark worked together later, and we know that Paul and Silas had a successful ministry as well.
  - The team of Barnabas and Mark went to Cyprus while Paul and Silas went through Syria and Cilicia, doing a *church-strengthening* work.
  - Remember that, at this point, no “gentile churches” had been established, as far as we know.
    - There were Jews and Gentiles, both believing, and both serving the Lord together, though under different programs.
    - This is why we see books like Ephesians and 1st and 2nd Corinthians have a mixture of kingdom messages and grace messages.
    - This is also why it was important for Paul to have a companion from Peter’s flock.