

Acts 15 - How did the Early Church and Apostles respond to division in the body?

The Jerusalem Council

Now that the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas has been completed and the churches which they established in the Galatian country are 100 percent Gentile, the church faces its first great crisis.

In Judea many of the Hebrew converts are Pharisees who have no intention of giving up the Mosaic system. They assert that the Gentiles must also come into the church through the Mosaic system. In fact, they believe that Gentiles are not saved until they are circumcised.

The news of this contention reaches the church in Jerusalem. The apostles must now face up to the question. What course is the church to take? So, in Jerusalem the first church council convenes to resolve the matter.

Down through history you will find that there have been other church councils that have decided other great issues, such as the validity and the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Another council decided upon the deity of Christ and the fact that He is both God and man. And there have been other important councils when differences arose in the church. Some folk may think that we need a council in our day. We certainly do. However, I am afraid there could never be an agreement because too many churches are far removed from the person of Christ. A council that cannot meet around the person of Christ is not actually a church council because the Lord Jesus Christ is the very center of the church. The issue is not one of ritual, or of membership, or of ceremony. The central issue is that of one's personal relationship to Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, people who are personally far removed from Christ and who do not experience fellowship with Him want to argue about ritual. Oh, they may carry a big Bible under their arm, go to church on Sunday and sing the hymns lustily, but on Monday the Lord Jesus is far removed from them.

Friend, the Lord Jesus should occupy the very center of our lives. We should think of Him constantly. We should not see a sunset without thinking of the One who made it. He should be brought into our daily living, into all situations of life, our tensions and our anxieties.

Now let's turn our attention to this council at Jerusalem. An outstanding group has come together here. These men have convened in order to consider this great issue: law versus grace, or law versus liberty. - McGee

Act 15:1 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."

Here is the crux of the issue. It is not simply a question of whether one should be circumcised or not, whether one should eat meat or not. The question is: Must one do any of these things in order to be saved? Now we will move on and penetrate a little deeper into their problem. - McGee

Act 15:2 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.

Again I call attention to Dr. Luke's use of the diminutive. "No small dissension" really means they had a regular donnybrook! It was a heated debate.

We need to realize here that it is really the gospel which is under question at this council. The Epistle to the Galatians gives us a full explanation of the council.

The gospel is used in two senses in the New Testament. First of all, there are the facts of the gospel. These are absolutely basic and essential. Paul gives those facts in the first five verses of 1 Corinthians 15. It is the death, the burial, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in

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memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve." These are the facts of the gospel, and they concern the person of Christ. I move on down to 1Co_15:15-17 : "Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." Face up to it, my friend; if Christ is not raised from the dead, then there is no gospel at all. But thanks be to God, "... Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept" (1Co_15:20). The facts of the gospel are the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

The second sense of the gospel is the interpretation of the facts. It is this interpretation which is the basic truth in the Epistle to the Galatians. That is the crux of the whole matter at this first council at Jerusalem. Thus the gospel also hinges on this fact which Paul states in Gal_3:22 : "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." What must one do to be saved? Nothing more nor less than believe. Again in Gal_2:15-16 : "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." That is important to see.

The Judaizers of that day were different from the liberals of today. The liberal will actually deny the facts of the gospel. He will deny the physical resurrection of Christ. Some go so far as to say that Jesus Christ is just a myth, that He never lived or died. Most of them do not try to upset history quite to that extent. However, they deny that Jesus died for our sins.

In the first century the Judaizers did not deny the facts of the gospel—there simply were too many witnesses. Paul says that over five hundred people saw the risen Christ at one time. My friend, if you get five hundred witnesses into any law court, you will win your case! Also, the apostles were witnesses to the risen Christ. They were there to testify to it. The facts of the gospel were not under question by the Judaizers.

The contention arose over the interpretation of those facts. What did Christ do for you on the Cross? Is the work of Christ adequate to save you? Do you need to go through some ritual or something else in order to be saved? Must you go through the Law? These are the questions they were asking. - McGee

Act 15:-4 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. 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.

Paul and Barnabas vigorously opposed these Judaizers, knowing that they had come to rob the Gentile believers of their liberty in Christ Jesus.

Here in Acts 15 we learn that the brethren in Antioch decided to send Paul and Barnabas and certain others ... to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders there. In Gal_2:2 Paul says that he went to Jerusalem by revelation. There is no contradiction, of course. The Spirit of God revealed to Paul that he should go, and also revealed to the church in Antioch that the brethren should send him. En route to Jerusalem the group stopped at various points in Phoenicia and Samaria, giving an account of the conversion of the Gentiles, and causing great joy wherever the story was told.

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When he first arrived in Jerusalem, Paul went to the apostles and the elders privately and gave them a full account of the gospel which he had been preaching to the Gentiles. They had to admit that it was the same gospel which they had been preaching to the Jews. – Believers Bible Commentary

Paul and Barnabas give a report to the church in Jerusalem just as they had done to the church in Antioch. They tell them, “We have preached the gospel, and men and women over in the Galatian country have trusted Christ. They know nothing about Mosaic Law. They trusted Christ and were saved.” - McGee

Act 15:5-6 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." Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.

Apparently, it was in an open meeting of the entire church that certain of the Pharisees who were believers rose up and contended that Gentiles must be circumcised and must keep the law of Moses in order to be disciples in the truest sense. From verse 6 it might appear that only the apostles and elders were present when the final decision was made. However, verse 12 seems to indicate that the entire church was there as well. – Believers Bible Commentary

They wanted to add something to the gospel. Friend, whenever you add something to the gospel, you no longer have the gospel but you have a religion. You no longer have the gospel of Jesus Christ. The only approach that you can make to Jesus Christ is by faith. We must all come to Him by faith. He won't let us come any other way. Jesus said, “... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Joh_14:6). He's bottled the whole world into this. There is only one question God asks the lost world: “What do you do with My Son who died for you?” God doesn't give us some little Sunday school lesson by saying, “I want you to be a good boy. I want you to join a church. I want you go through this and that ritual.” That kind of teaching is only for an insipid religion. It does not come from God. God is saying, “My Son died for you. What will you do with Him?” The answer to that question will determine your eternal destiny. This is the issue being discussed at the council in Jerusalem. This is really exciting. – McGee

Jesus + 0 = Salvation. Adding or subtracting anything from believing in the miraculous birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus for your sins is another Gospel altogether. Works have to do with sanctification, rewards, fellowship, and the abundant life here, and nothing to do with salvation! However, true belief will result in fruit and works.

Act 15:7 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.

I don't think that this is the first time Peter spoke. If he had been quiet through all that time of disputing, it certainly would not have been consistent with his character. No, I'm of the opinion that he had already put in his two bits worth before this. But now he is going to sum up the whole thing. This is not a new decision for Peter. Peter had already declared this same thing at the time of the conversion of Cornelius. Remember that Peter himself had been shocked by the truth of it. He was told to go into the home of a Gentile and preach the gospel without the Law. The people were uncircumcised, they didn't follow the Mosaic system, they ate pork—and yet they were saved!

The council would listen to Simon Peter because he was narrow-minded—I don't say this in an ugly way—I mean that he was a Jew of the Jews. He himself said he had never eaten anything unclean, and he wouldn't have thought of entering the home of a Gentile. He stuck as close to the Mosaic system as any man could. So if Peter spoke up, they would listen.

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Now he testifies that the Gentiles had heard the gospel from his mouth and had believed. You mean they were actually saved? Yes, they were saved by grace. Peter himself had to learn that salvation is not decided by whether one eats meat or doesn't eat meat, whether one eats pork or doesn't eat pork. Salvation is not dependent on our observation of the Sabbath, or Sunday, or any other day. Salvation is by grace through faith. We are free to choose what we wish to do about these other things. We have freedom in that connection. - McGee

Act 15:8-9 So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

Does Peter say that God purified their hearts by keeping the law? No! By going through a ceremony? No! By joining a church? No! By faith. Peter said, "I went into the home of Cornelius. I gave them the facts of the gospel. They believed and were saved—the Holy Ghost came upon them just as He had come to us in Jerusalem."

My friend, this is always the only way of salvation. It is by faith. You don't have to do anything to merit your salvation. Jesus Christ did it all for you nineteen hundred years ago. All God asks you to do is to accept His Son who died for you. - McGee

Act 15:10 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?

Simon Peter makes a tremendous admission here. He says that neither they nor their fathers kept the Law. I have said this many times before, and I will say it many, many times more: God has never saved anybody through the keeping of the Law. Do you know why? There has never been a person who has kept it. God saves on one basis and one basis only: faith in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before the time of Christ, men brought a sacrifice to God. They brought that sacrifice by faith. Abel understood that the little lamb could never take away sin. He understood that the little lamb pointed to the One about whom God had told his mother. He had said that the Seed of the woman would come and would bruise the head of the serpent (Gen_3:15). Abel believed that. He believed God. He was saved by faith.

So Simon Peter says, "To tell the truth—why don't we admit it—we can't keep the Law." You see, there is nothing more hypocritical than to pretend that you are living life on a high spiritual plane, that you are living by the Sermon on the Mount and you are keeping God's Law. There is no use pretending.

I wish I could look you in the eye and ask you, "Why don't you admit that you are a lost sinner? Why don't you confess that you do not please God, that you have no capacity for Him? Why don't you come to God as a sinner and trust Christ as your Savior?" He will receive you! "... Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (Joh_6:37). That is the way I came to the Lord. Everybody I have ever met who has been saved has come to Him in that way. Saul of Tarsus came like that. The Ethiopian eunuch came like that. All who have come to Christ have come like that. - McGee

Act 15:11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

Simon Peter puts it so nicely. The Jews must be saved in exactly the same way that the Gentiles are saved. I'm pretty sure that Simon Peter still didn't eat pork at this time, but he implies, "I'm not saved because I don't eat pork; I'm saved because I have trusted Christ." He is saved by the grace of God. - McGee

Act 15:12 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.

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What a story they had to tell! I wish I could have sat in on the council of Jerusalem. Especially I wish I could have heard these two men tell their experiences in the Galatian country.

The next man to get up to speak will be James. I want to stop here for a moment to explain that this was not James, the brother of John, as he had already died a martyr's death (Act_12:2). There is some question as to who this James was. We know that he became the leader of the church in Jerusalem. He has already been mentioned as a leader by Peter in Act_12:17. This may have been James, the son of Alphaeus, one of the twelve (Mat_10:3). However, the tradition of the church from the early church fathers has identified this man as James, the half brother of our Lord (Mat_13:55), the same one who wrote the Epistle of James.

I should stop here to make another remark. I believe that the proper way to study the Book of Acts is to study it along with the Epistles. For example, we have already mentioned the Epistle to the Galatians, and during the study of Acts 13 and 14 would be a good time to read that Epistle. At this point in Acts 15 it would be appropriate to study the Epistle of James.

James is going to sum up the thinking of this council at Jerusalem, and He will put down God's program for the future.

We need to remember that these men stood with their noses pressed right up to the window of the opening of a new dispensation. The church had been brought into existence at Pentecost; it was still very new, in its infancy. Some people still do not understand that we live in the age of grace, the period of the church. So let us not be too critical of these men who stood on the threshold of this new age.

Act 15:13-14 And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.

I take it that after Simon Peter spoke and after Paul and Barnabas gave their report, there was silence because no one had anything to say. Even the Judaizers were silenced by the reports of what had taken place.

When James speaks to the crowd on that day, he asks them to "hearken," that is, to really listen. What he has to say is very important. So, he means that you and I should listen to him, too. Probably all of us should spend more time listening to God and less time doing the talking. Well, now let's listen.

James completely agrees with Peter. They state the plan of God for today. Is God saving the whole world? No. Is God bringing in His Kingdom? No. Then what is God doing today? He is visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. We learn in Revelation that standing before the throne of God there will be those of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. The Word of God is to go out into the world. There will be opposition to it and there will be apostasy, but the Word of God is to go out to all the world because God is calling out a people for His name.

This is why I am so anxious to get out the Word of God. Right now, there are people of every color, every clime, every condition, every race, and practically every nation who hear Bible teaching by radio. We broadcast on stations that pretty well circle the globe. Thank God we can use this means to get out the Word of God. What does God do with that Word? He is calling out a people for His name. Not everyone who hears believes the Word. Not everyone accepts the good news of Jesus Christ. But of those who hear, God calls out a people for His name. Underline verse Act_15:14 in your Bible—I have it circled in mine. God is visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. I am so thankful that He has given me the opportunity to tell people about salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ and to teach them the Word of God. - McGee

Act 15:15-19 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'AFTER THIS I WILL RETURN AND WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID, WHICH HAS FALLEN DOWN; I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I

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WILL SET IT UP; 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.' "Known to God from eternity are all His works. Therefore, I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,

Then James quoted from Amo_9:11-12. Notice that he did not say that the calling out of the Gentiles was in fulfillment of the prophecy of Amos, but rather that it agreed with the words of the prophets. The assembly should not think it a strange thing that God should visit the Gentiles with salvation, because this had been clearly predicted in the OT. God had foretold that Gentiles would be blessed as such, and not as believing Jews.

The quotation from Amos looks forward to the Millennium, when Christ will sit upon the throne of David and when the Gentiles will seek after the Lord. James did not intimate that this prophecy was being fulfilled at the time he spoke. Rather, he said that the salvation of Gentiles which was then taking place was in harmony or agreement with what Amos said would take place later.

James' argument was this: First God would visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. This is what was then happening (and is still happening). Converted Gentiles were included in the church with converted Jews. What was then happening on a small scale (the salvation of the Gentiles) would later happen on a larger scale. Christ would return, restore Israel nationally, and save all the Gentiles who would be called by His name.

James looked on contemporary events as God's first visitation of the Gentiles. He felt this first visitation was in perfect harmony with what Amos predicted—the future visitation of the Gentiles when Christ returns as King. The two events agree though they are not identical.

Notice, then, the order of events:

1. The taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name (v. 14) during this present Age of Grace.
2. The restoration of the believing portion of the nation of Israel at Christ's second advent (v. 16).
3. The salvation of Gentile nations following the restoration of Israel (v. 17). These Gentiles are referred to as all the Gentiles who are called by My name.

James' quotation of Amo_9:11-12 is quite different from the rendering in the OT. Part of this difference is explained by the fact that James apparently quoted in Greek. However, the quotation is quite different even from the Septuagint. One explanation is that the same Holy Spirit who originally inspired the words now permitted them to be changed in order to meet the problem at hand. Another is that the Hebrew manuscripts have several readings in Amos 9. Alford believes James must have quoted from a translation close to a received Hebrew text, otherwise the Pharisees would never have accepted the quotation as proof.

After this I will return (v. 16). James had already stated that God's program for this present age was to open the door of faith to the Gentiles. Not all of them would be saved, but He would take out of them a people for His name. Now James added that after this, that is, after the church has been called out from the nations, God would return and rebuild the tabernacle of David, which is fallen and in ruins. The tabernacle of David is a figurative expression describing his house or family. Its restoration is a type of the future restoration of the royal family and the re-establishment of the throne of David with Christ sitting upon it as King. Israel will then become the channel of blessing to the world. The rest of mankind will seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by His name.

The quotation from Amos closes with the statement that these are the words of the Lord who does all these things.

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Therefore, because God's present purpose is to call out from the Gentiles a people for Himself, James cautioned against troubling the Gentiles by putting them under the Law of Moses. As far as salvation is concerned, all that was needed was faith. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 15:20 but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.

However, he suggested that in writing to the church at Antioch the saints there be advised to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. It might seem at first that James was here reversing himself. Was this not a form of legalism? Was he not now putting them back under the law? The answer is that this advice did not have to do with the subject of salvation at all. That issue had already been settled. But this advice had to do with fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers. While obedience to these instructions was not a condition of salvation, it was certainly of great importance in avoiding sharp cleavages in the early church.

The things prohibited were:

1. Things polluted by idols. In verse 29 this is explained as foods offered to idols. If Gentile believers went on eating these foods, then their Jewish brethren might seriously wonder whether they had given up idolatry. Although Gentile Christians might have liberty to eat such foods, it might prove a stumbling block to weak Jewish brethren and would therefore be wrong.
2. Sexual immorality. This was the cardinal sin of the Gentiles. It was therefore especially important for James to include this with the other subjects mentioned. Nowhere in the Bible is the command to abstain from sexual immorality ever revoked. It is of standing application for all ages.
3. Things strangled. This prohibition goes back to the covenant which God made with Noah after the flood (Gen_9:4). Thus, it is a standing order for the human race and not just for the nation of Israel.
4. Blood. This too goes back to Gen_9:4 and thus precedes the Law of Moses. Since the Covenant with Noah was never abrogated, we take it that these regulations are still in effect today. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 15:21-22 For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." 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.

This explains why the advice of verse 20 was given. There were Jews in every city who had always been taught that it was wrong to do these things that James warned against. It was wrong not only to commit immorality but also to eat food offered to idols, meat from strangled animals, and blood. Why then should the Gentiles offend God by committing immorality, or offend man by doing the other things?

It was thus definitely decided that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised in order to be saved. The next step was to send official notice of this in writing to the church at Antioch. The apostles and elders in Jerusalem, with the whole church, designated Judas, called Barsabas, and Silas, both leading men among the brethren, to go back to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. This Silas is the one who later became a traveling companion of Paul, and who is referred to as Silvanus in the Epistles.

Acts 15:23-29 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. 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"—

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to whom we gave no such commandment— it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: 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.

The substance of the letter is given here. Notice that the false brethren who went from Jerusalem to Antioch originally had never received the authorization or approval of the church in Jerusalem (v. 24).

The moment by moment reliance of the disciples on the Holy Spirit is suggested in verse 28: For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us Someone has spoken of this as “the senior partnership of the Holy Spirit.” – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 15:30-31 So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement.

There is consolation and comfort in the gospel; there is nothing but condemnation in the Law. The Law condemns. The Law is a mirror. When I look in it, I say, “Oh, McGee, you are ugly! You have fallen short of the glory of God.” But the gospel says, “Come on to God. He wants to receive you. He will save you by His grace.” It is comfort, you see. - McGee

Act 15:32-35 Now, Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words. And after they had stayed there for a time, they were sent back with greetings from the brethren to the apostles. However, it seemed good to Silas to remain there. Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

It is evident that Paul and Silas got along well together. Silas must have liked Paul and enjoyed working with him. So, he stayed there at the church in Antioch. He must have been excited about working with these gentile believers. At any rate, he stayed. Paul and Barnabas were actually the pastors of the church there. - McGee

Paul and Barnabas Separate

Act 15:36-37 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." Now, Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark.

Paul had a concern for the churches, a genuine concern for the believers. Knowing how fickle the Galatians were, he thought it would be a good idea to go back again and to visit those churches.

We know Barnabas as a very generous, gracious fellow. He is eager to give John Mark another chance. But I want to note that when he has made up his mind, he is hardheaded. Remember that both these men were human. Paul and Barnabas each took a stand and would not budge. - McGee

Act 15:38 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. Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so, Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus;

Paul had his convictions also. Barnabas wants to take John Mark along, and Paul will not do it. Well, I'm glad these two brethren had this little altercation because it teaches me that these men were human and that even the saints can disagree without being disagreeable. They didn't break up anything. They did not split the church

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and form two different churches in Antioch. They just disagreed. It's all right to disagree with some of the brethren.

The account does not follow Barnabas any longer. He went to Cyprus and there he had a great ministry. Barnabas had come from Cyprus; it was his home. He had a desire to take the gospel to his own people. We know from tradition that he had a great ministry there, and from Cyprus a great ministry was carried on in North Africa.

At this point Barnabas sails off the pages of the Scriptures. The Bible does not give us information about his ministry. From here on we are going to follow Paul. - McGee

Act 15:40 -41 but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

The church now has two great mission projects where before they had only one. Barnabas is going in one direction and Paul is going another. This is God's method. God will use both these men. Paul now has Silas with him, and the brethren recommended them "unto the grace of God." – McGee

What Satan meant to divide; God used to multiply!