

The Acts of the Apostles

Lesson 14: The Council at Jerusalem

Acts 15:1-41

Here in Antioch, the church faced her first doctrinal crisis.

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter declared, **“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved”** (Acts 2:21). But now, men were teaching that this was not enough.



Acts 15:1

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No matter which direction you were traveling, the Bible always says you came down from Judaea.



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- 2) Salvation was by works.
- 3) All Christians were subject to the Law of Moses.



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If what they said was true...

- 1) The Gentiles who came to Christ by faith alone were not truly saved.
- 2) Salvation was by works.
- 3) All Christians were subject to the Law of Moses.
- 4) The Jewish Christian was a higher class of Christian than his Gentile brother.



Acts 15:2

When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.





Paul wrote of this trip to Jerusalem in his letter to the Galatians:

Galatians 2:1-2a

- ¹ Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.
- ² And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles ...

The trip was financed by the church in Antioch.

Acts 15:3

And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.



Acts 15:4

And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.



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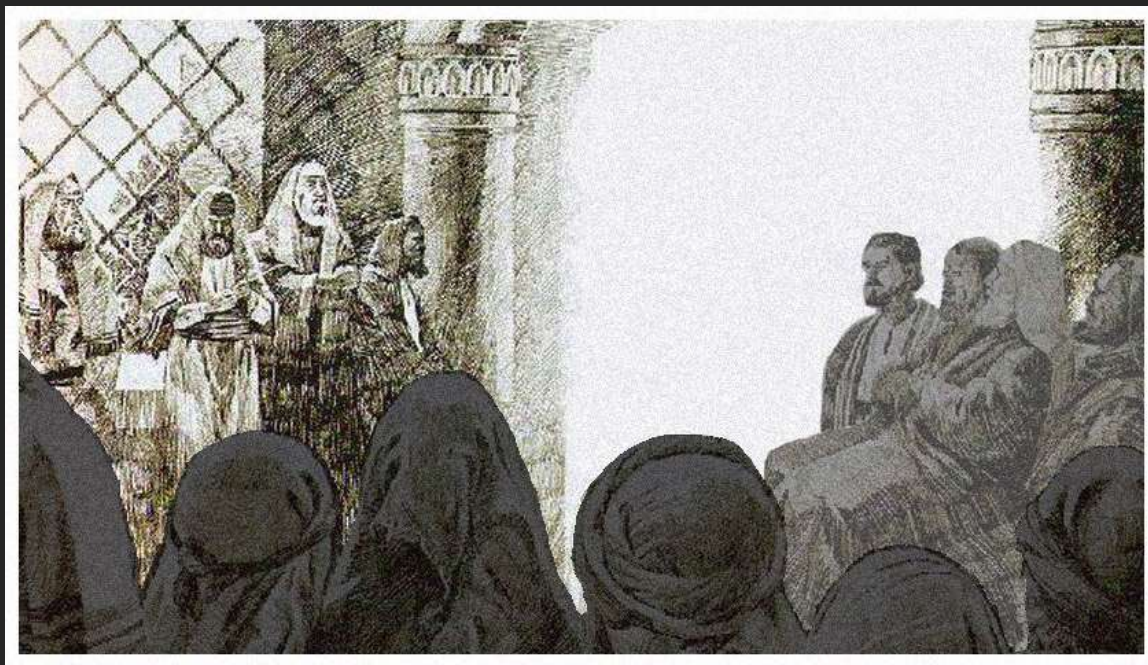
This important meeting is known as “The Council of Jerusalem.”



The trouble came from a group of Pharisees who believed on Christ.

Acts 15:5-6

- ⁵ But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses.
- ⁶ And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.



Peter, the apostle to the circumcision (Gal. 2:8), was the first to speak:

Acts 15:7

⁷ And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them,
Men *and* brethren,
ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.



Acts 15:8-9

- ⁸ And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us;
- ⁹ And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.



Acts 15:10-11

- ¹⁰ Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon 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, even as they.



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Paul also called the Law a “yoke.”

Galatians 5:1

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

Acts 15:10-11

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Peter wisely pointed out that the Jews needed God's free gift of grace just as much as the Gentiles.

Acts 15:10-11

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These are the last words spoken by Peter in the book of Acts!

Next, Paul and Barnabas spoke about their work among the Gentiles:

Acts 15:12

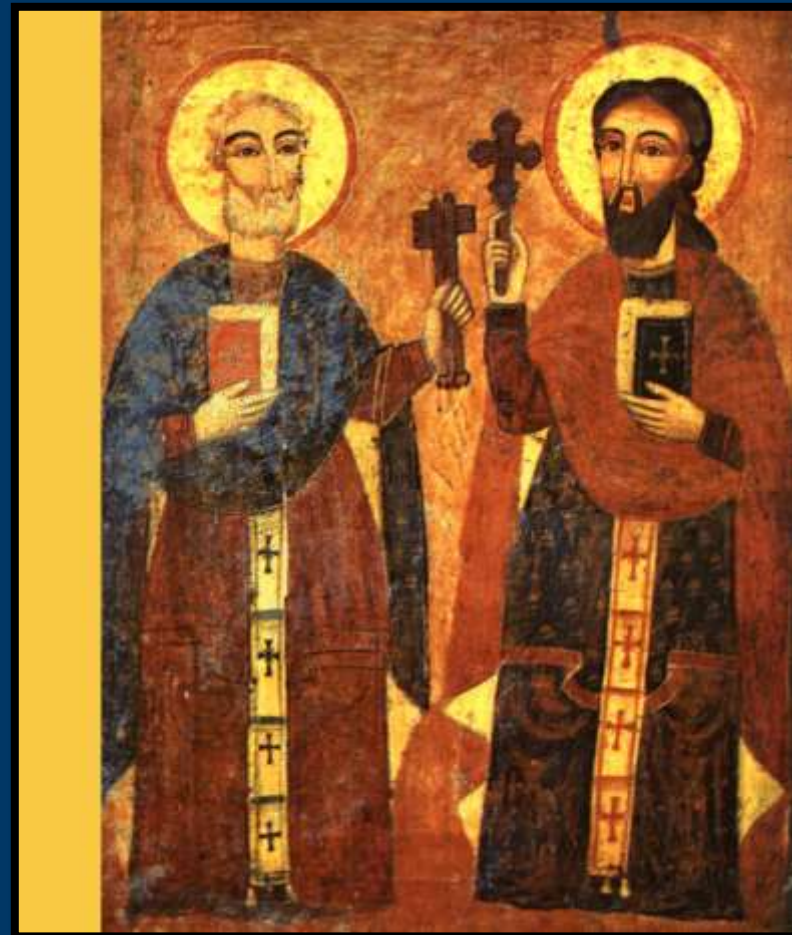
¹² Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.



The Apostle James had the final word:

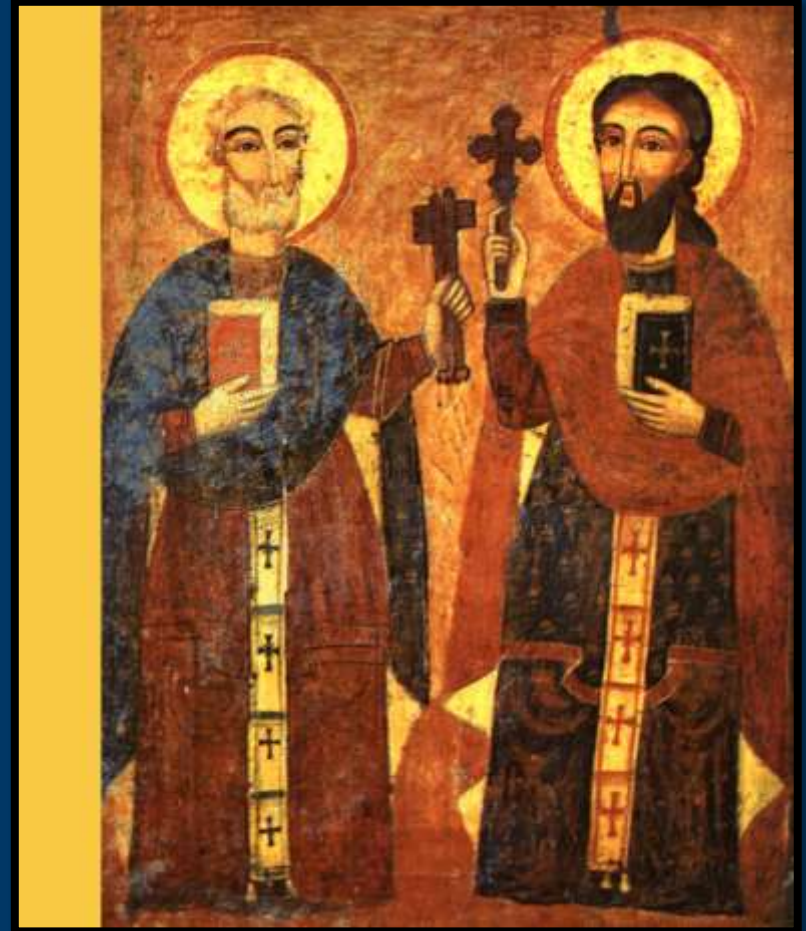
Acts 15:13-14

- ¹³ And after they had held their peace,
James answered, saying,
Men *and* brethren, hearken unto me:
¹⁴ Simeon hath declared how God at
the first did visit the Gentiles, to take
out of them a people for his name.



Acts 15:15-17

- ¹⁵ And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,
- ¹⁶ After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:
- ¹⁷ That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.



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This is from Amos 9:

- ¹¹ In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:
- ¹² That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this.

James continued:

Acts 15:18-21

- ¹⁸ Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.
- ¹⁹ Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:
- ²⁰ But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and *from* fornication, and *from* things strangled, and *from* blood.
- ²¹ For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

1. idols
2. fornication
3. things strangled
4. blood

Acts 15:18-21

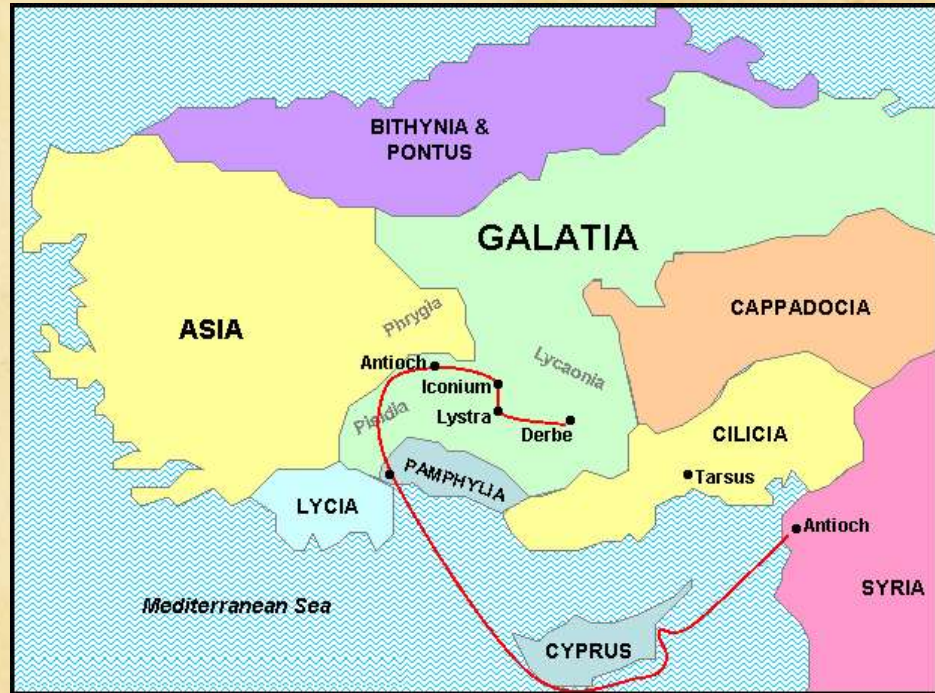
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James said nothing about circumcision or salvation.

Those things are addressed by Paul in his letter to the churches in Galatia:

Galatians 5:2-4, 6

- ² Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.
- ³ For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.
- ⁴ Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.
- ⁶ For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.



Paul went through Galatia in his first mission.

The Council completed its work and wrote a letter to the churches in Antioch:

Acts 15:22-23a

- ²² Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:
- ²³ And they wrote *letters* by them after this manner...



Acts 15:23b-29

- ²³ The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:
- ²⁴ Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:*
- ²⁵ It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,
- ²⁶ Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- ²⁷ We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.
- ²⁸ For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;
- ²⁹ That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well.

Fare ye well.

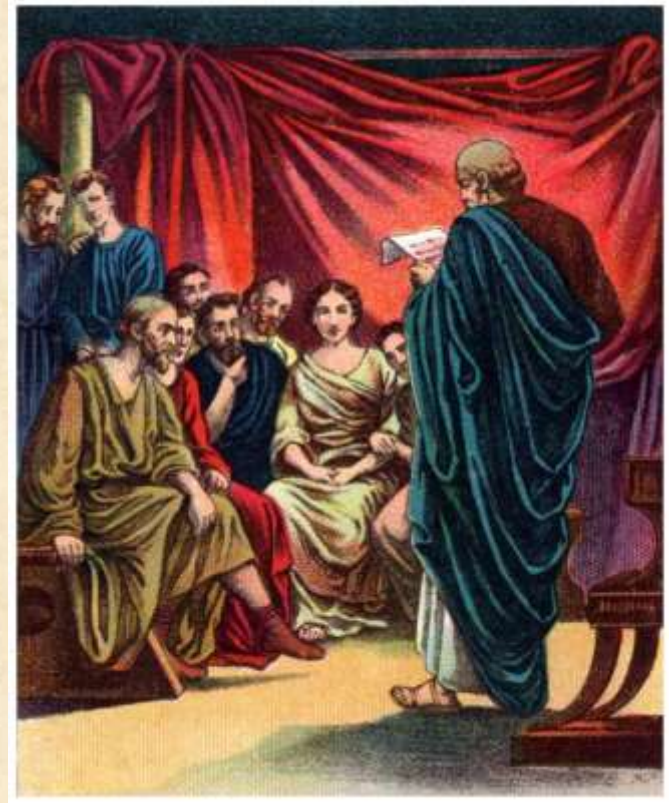
Acts 15:30-31

³⁰ So when they were dismissed,
they came to Antioch:
and when they had gathered the multitude together,
they delivered the epistle:
³¹ Which when they had read,
they rejoiced for the consolation.



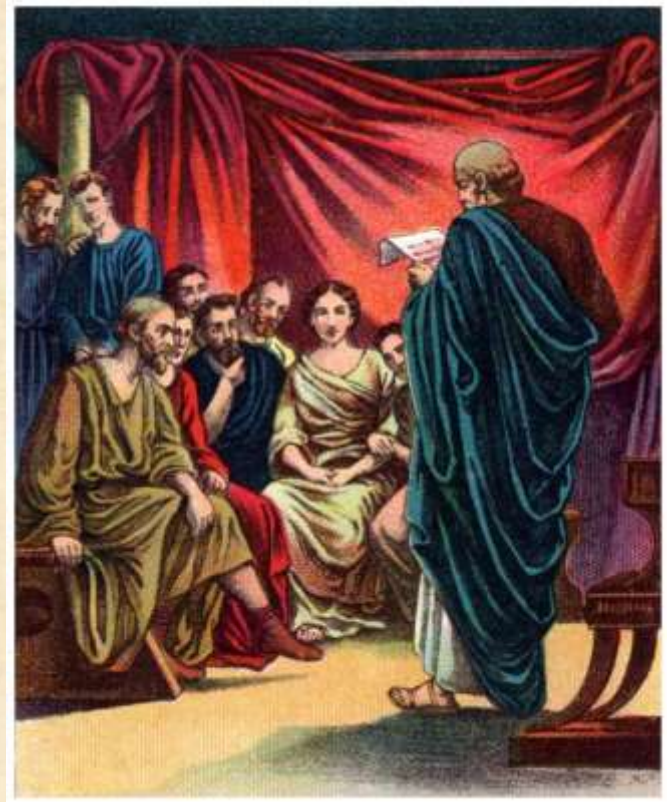
Acts 15:32-35

- 32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed *them*.
- 33 And after they had tarried *there* a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.
- 34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.
- 35 **Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch**, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.



Acts 15:32-35

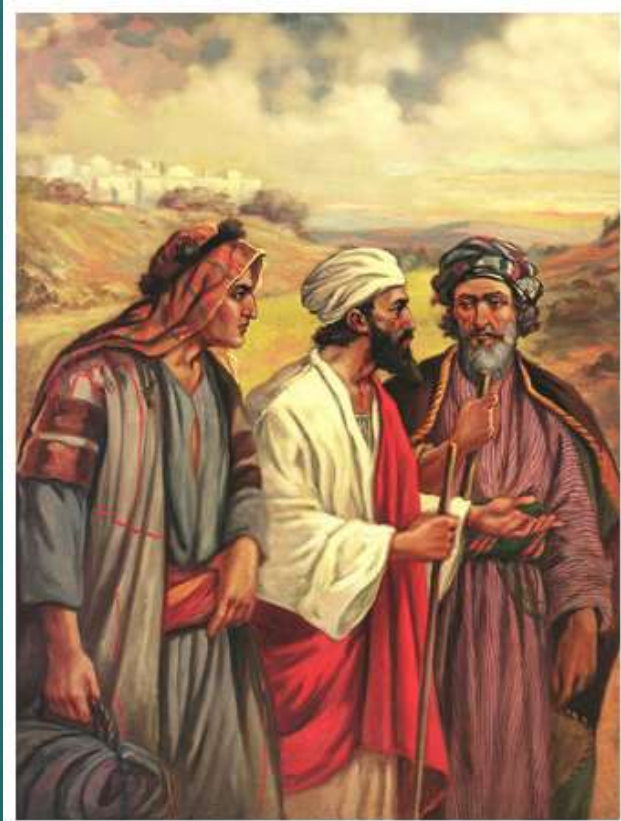
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We shall soon see that this was the Lord at work in his heart.

Acts 15:36-37

- ³⁶ And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see how they do.*
- ³⁷ And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.



Acts 15:38-39

- ³⁸ But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.
- ³⁹ And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;



Acts 15:38-39

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Barnabas was confident that his nephew had repented. Paul did not want to take that chance.

Proverbs 25:19

- ¹⁹ Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble *is like* a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.



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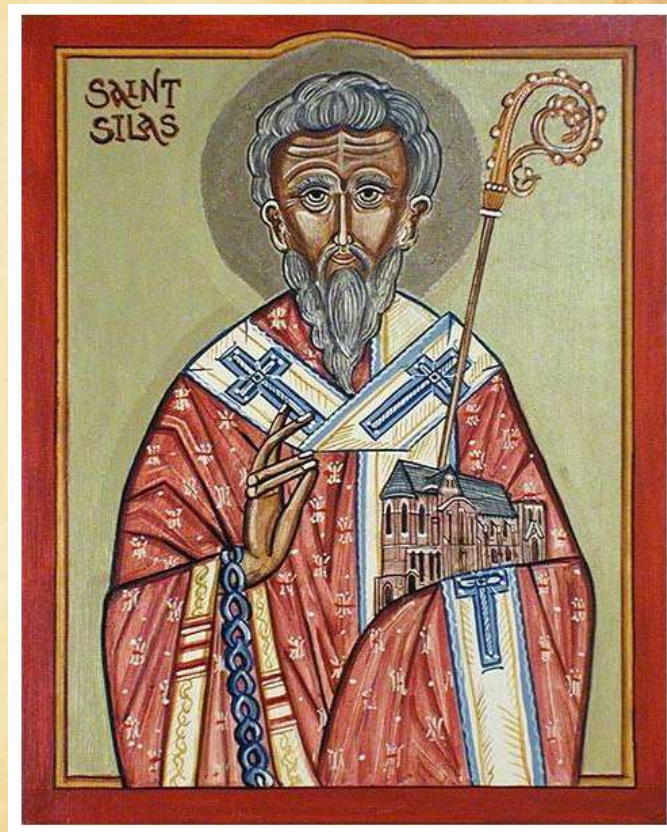
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History shows that Mark learned his lesson. He was later entrusted by God to write The Gospel of Mark.



Acts 15:40-41

- ⁴⁰ And Paul chose Silas,
and departed,
being recommended by the
brethren unto the grace of God.
⁴¹ And he went through Syria and
Cilicia, confirming the churches.



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End of Chapter 15



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End of Chapter 15

And here, joined by Silas, Paul began his second missionary journey.





UP NEXT:
Paul answers the Macedonian Call

Questions to test your understanding of this lesson:

1. According to Acts 15:5, what group began to question the requirements of salvation?
2. According to Acts 15:5, what were the two things they said were needed to be saved?
3. Who was the first apostle to speak in the Jerusalem Council?
4. What are the last words spoken by Peter in the book of Acts?
5. Who were the next two people to speak at the Jerusalem Council?
6. Who was the last person to speak at the Jerusalem Council?
7. What were the four things the Gentiles were told to avoid?
8. According to Acts 15:22, who were the four men sent to Antioch with a letter from the council?
9. Out of these four men, who is the only one who returned right away to Jerusalem?
10. Paul and Barnabas separated after a disagreement about what man?

Each question is worth 10 points. Do NOT share your answers with other students.



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