

THE LIFE OF PAUL

LESSON IV

PAUL AND BARNABAS MEET THE ELDERS AND APOSTLES IN JERUSALEM

1. Read Acts 15:1-35; Gal. 2:1-21; I Cor. 16:1-4; II Cor. 8:1-9.
2. Where are Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:1? Acts 14:26 (**Acts 14:26 - From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed.**)
3. Who comes to Antioch, while Paul and Barnabas are there? Acts 15:24; Gal. 2:11-12 (**Acts 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."**) (**Acts 15:24 - 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'-- to whom we gave no such commandment--**) (**Gal 2:11-12 - Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.)**)
4. What were these men teaching and by whose authority? Acts 15:1,24 (**Acts 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."**) (**Acts 15:24 - 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'-- to whom we gave no such commandment--**) (**Gal 2:11-12 - Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.)**) These men were teaching that the Gentiles must be circumcised and keep all of the law given by Moses. They claimed to be sent by James.
5. Who decided that they should go to Jerusalem? Why do you think they thought it was necessary to go to Jerusalem? Acts 15:2; Gal. 2:2-9 (**Acts 15:2-3 - 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. So, being sent on their way by the church,**) (**Gal 2:2-9 - And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.** And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. **But from those who seemed to be something-- whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man-- for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.** But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles),

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and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.)

6. How long had it been since Paul had been to Jerusalem? Who did he and Barnabas take with them? Why did they take him along? Gal. 2:1,3 (**Gal 2:1 - Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.) (Gal 2:3 - Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.)**) Titus was an example of the dispute, being a Greek, not a Hebrew; Paul did not circumcise him.
7. Do you think there were Christians in Phoenicia and Samaria? If so, how did these conversions to Christ take place? Acts 15:3 (**Acts 15:3 - 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.)**) Obviously there were Christians in these locations and they would have most likely been Gentiles. They could have been taught by Paul when he was taken to Caesarea from Jerusalem and he went on to Tarsus (Acts 9:30). This would have been on his way. They could also have been taught by the Christians when they were scattered from Jerusalem due to Paul's persecution of the church (Acts 8:1).
8. What did the group from Antioch do once they arrived in Jerusalem? Acts 15:4-5 (**Acts 15:4-5 - 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. 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."**) They told about the success of teaching Christ among the Gentiles and discussed the issue of circumcision and keeping the law.
9. What group of people met together for the purpose to determine what should be done about the issue at hand? Acts 15:6 (**Acts 15:6 - Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.)**
10. What was the real issue under consideration? Acts 15:1,10,19-21,29 (**Acts 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."**) (**Acts 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?"**) (**Acts 15:19-21 - "Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."**) (**Acts 15:29 - 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.)**
11. What did this assembly teach Paul? Gal. 2:6 (**Gal 2:6 - But from those who seemed to be something-- whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man-- for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.)**) Paul said that they taught him nothing that the Lord had not already revealed to him.
12. Summarize Peter's and James' judgment on the issue. Acts 15:7-11; 15:13-21 (**Acts 15:7-11 - 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**

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my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. "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. "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? "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they." (Acts 15:13-21 -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. "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 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, "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.")

13. Who participated in making judgment on this issue besides Peter and James? Acts 15:28-29 (**Acts 15:28-29 - 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.**)
14. While this instruction by the Holy Spirit may seem confusing in light of other Scripture let us examine other references and come to a conclusion. **Rom 14:1-4; Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. 2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. 3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. 4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. Rom 14:12-13; 12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. 13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. 1 Cor 8:7-9; 7 However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. 8 But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. 9 But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. NKJV** Is there anything wrong with eating meat sacrificed to idols? Of course not but the Holy Spirit knew that many of the gentiles were still weak in the faith and they would violate their conscience if encouraged to eat meat which may have been sacrificed to idols.
15. Look up Old Testament references prophesying that the Gentiles would be offered salvation through Christ.
 - a) **Isa 2:2-4 - Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the**

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LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

- b) **Isa 42:6 - "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles,**
 - c) **Isa 49:6 - Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.'"**
 - d) **Micah 4:1-4 - Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.**
 - e) **Gen. 12:3 - I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."**
 - f) **Gen. 18:18 - "since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?**
 - g) **Gen. 22:18 - "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."**
 - h) **Gen. 26 - "And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;**
16. Review the following scriptures and explain in your own words, should the Christian eat meat offered to idols? Be prepared to discuss the wisdom of the Holy Spirit and the leaders assembled in Jerusalem concerning this subject.
- a) **Acts 15:20 - "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.**
 - b) **Acts 15:29 - 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.**
 - c) **1 Cor 8:1-13 - Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him. Therefore concerning**

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the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

- d) 1 Cor 10:18-33 - Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He? All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being. Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness." If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake. But if anyone says to you, "This was offered to idols," do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness." "Conscience," I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by another man's But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the food over which I give thanks? Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.
- e) Col. 2:16- - So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.
- f) Rom 14:1-8 - Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge an other's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make

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him stand. One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks. For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

- g) **1 Cor 6:12-13 - All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.**
- h) **If one was to eat meat offered to idols, at the table in an idols temple, he was in a sense worshipping the idol. Just as the Jewish priest ate of the sacrifice as part of the worship (Lev. 17:15-18; 8:31). If one was to sit at the meal of meats that had been offered to idols, this could be misunderstood as worship of the idol by association. Paul points out in I Cor. 8:4-6,8 that idols or meats are nothing. Therefore to eat the meat neither makes us better or worse. He is quick to point out that some Christians will not be knowledgeable of this and that we should be careful not to cause a brother to stumble. In Rom. 14:23, Paul speaks to how someone could stumble or be offended or to actually go against their conscience by our conduct. Paul summarizes in I Cor. 10:23-24,31-33. All things are lawful, but they are not always expedient or helpful. Don't seek your own good, but the good of others.**
17. What action was taken as a result of this meeting? Acts 15:22-23 **(Acts 15:22-23 - 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. 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.)**
18. Why did Judas and Silas go back to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas? Acts 15:22,27,32 **(Acts 15:25-27 - 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.)** To confirm the word of Paul and Barnabas and the letter.
19. Explain why Paul was so insistent that Titus not be circumcised and yet he agreed not to eat certain meat? **In Acts 15:18, the scripture says: "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things."** I believe that Paul agreed to not eat meat offered to idols etc. because to do otherwise would have put a stumbling block before the Christian Jews. To have agreed to circumcise Titus would have been placing a stumbling block in front of Titus. Paul was dedicated to save all men who would turn to the Lord.
20. What had the brethren in Jerusalem recognized from this meeting? Gal. 2:7-9 **(Gal 2:7-9 - But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter {for He**

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who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles}, and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.)

21. How did Peter, James and John show their feelings towards Paul and Barnabas, during and after the confrontation was over. Acts 15:25-26; Gal 2:9 (**Acts 15:25-26 - 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.**) (Gal 2:9 - and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.)
22. What had the brethren in Jerusalem asked Paul and Barnabas to do? Gal. 2:10 (**Gal 2:10 - They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.**)