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THE CHURCH EXPERIENCES DIVISION IN APPLYING THE GOSPEL (ACTS 15:1-5).

¹ And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. 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. 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. 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. 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.

THE CHURCH EXERCISES WISDOM IN AFFIRMING THE GOSPEL (ACTS 15:6-11,22-29).

⁶ And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. 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. 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. 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. . . . 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; 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.

THE CHURCH ENCOURAGES UNITY IN ADVANCING THE GOSPEL (ACTS 15:30-35).

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. 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.

