Law versus Grace Confrontation !

V 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."

"Unless you are circumcised… you cannot be saved." **The justification for this false teaching was based on a rule which God Himself had instituted in the Old Testament (Genesis 17:9-14). Circumcision had always been the ultimate sign (before Jesus' coming) of one's "worship" or commitment to the true God. But now that Jesus had come, and God was opening wide the door of faith to the Gentiles, that rule had become far too restrictive.**

John the Baptist declared plainly, *"He who <u>believes</u> in the Son has everlasting life."* (John 3:36) Faith is now the only precondition to finding acceptance with God, to finding salvation. *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love."* (Galatians 5:6) *"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."* (John 1:17)

> **[The 10th chapter of Acts about Peter's meeting with Cornelius brought out a major weakness in the Early Church, that of] prejudice, tradition! The Church was already getting in a rut! All these new Gentiles were being saved & they weren't getting circumcised! They were eating the wrong kind of meat and they weren't observing the Sabbath. It got the Church all upset, so they had to have a big convention about it [which is what this chapter 15 is all about].**
>
> **They finally had to come to agreement though, thank the Lord! The Holy Spirit got all this worked out, and they finally had to confess, "Well, how can we deny them membership in the Church if they've already been saved, baptised and filled with the Holy Ghost, and God is using them!**
>
> **"They're preaching the Gospel and performing miracles. Look what God is doing with them!" Now the Church had to admit them. They had to get rid of a lot of their prejudices and their traditions to follow the Lord! Praise God! Amen?**
>
> **[from lecture delivered during the *Jesus Revolution* era, 1967]**

This doctrinal issue arose around A.D. 48-49, some 15 years after the founding of the Church, and about 10 years after Gentiles had been accepted into the Church, starting with the conversion of Cornelius and his household. In Church history much effort has been wasted and needless division caused by fighting over minor doctrinal issues. Nevertheless, when a major issue like this one threatens to weaken and stall the growth of the Church, then it is needful to tackle it and set the record straight.

Whether or not to enforce the Law of Moses was the first such issue to come up in the Early Church. The next one, referred to briefly in the Book of 1John and Revelation 2:24, was the infiltration of Gnostic doctrine (briefly summed up in Acts 8 study).

> **Throughout the history of Christianity, doctrine and interpretation of doctrine has played a major role, and often development of doctrine had to do with controversial matters that needed to be decided by the leaders of the church. Within the first decades of Christianity, when Paul and the apostles were alive, the early church leaders had to meet to discuss and settle issues which were bringing division.**
>
> **The problem [in Acts 15] was, at its root, a theological question. Jesus said the Gospel would be preached to the gentiles. He told His disciples, all of whom were Jews from Israel, to go everywhere and make disciples of everyone [Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15], which meant preaching to and converting non-Jews to the faith. Those like Paul, who preached the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire, were converting gentiles right and left and weren't requiring them to adhere to Jewish law; whereas some Christians of Jewish descent believed converts had to follow the laws of Moses. There was disagreement as to what should be expected of gentile believers, so elders of the church eventually had to get together to sort out both the practical and doctrinal side of things, which they did. The outcome was favorable to the gentile position…**
>
> **Similar situations occurred as time went on, when controversies arose regarding Christian beliefs. There was disagreement, so the leaders of the church, initially called bishops and later referred to as the church fathers, got together in councils to discuss, debate, pray about, and decide what was true Christian**

faith based on Scripture. Many of these men are acknowledged as great men of church history by all Christians, including the Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant faiths of today. The conclusions of these church fathers have been held as true since the time they were decided upon in the third to the seventh centuries, because their conclusions were based on Scripture and on truths taught in the Bible…

(*The Heart of It All:* "Introduction" Directors' corner, 12 April 2011)

V 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.

"No small dissension and dispute." **Having already confronted Jewish religious leaders who had opposed their work of bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles in central Turkey, Paul and Barnabas were more than ready to *"contend earnestly for the faith"* against this false doctrine which threatened to slow down the growth of the Early Church. (Jude 3) In the sphere of witnessing, usually it pays to be agreeable and kind in order to succeed in drawing people to the Lord, but there are times, like this one, when it pays to disagree.**

I'll say to you what my brother once said to me. He said, "Dave, don't let others drag you down to their level. – You pull them up to yours!" – A leader will keep on course and try to keep others on course in the direction he's going and pull them his way. But if you have a tendency to be pulled other ways by followers, then you're not much of a leader, if you can't buck the tide. Sometimes it pays to disagree, especially when you know it's not good. [from lecture delivered after the *Jesus Revolution* era, 1980]

Probably these *"certain men… from Judea",* because they had come from the mother church in Jerusalem, were regarded with great respect in Antioch, and their opinions carried more weight than they should have. Because of the deep disagreement, they could only manage to agree on one thing – to *"go up to Jerusalem"* and get the matter ironed out with the *"apostles and elders, about this question"*.

So when you have a problem to handle or a decision to make, don't be afraid to call your co-workers and fellow believers together for prayer, discussion and unanimous agreement. This is the way the Early Church was run, and the way any wise leader will operate.

The Early Church was not bound together by a dictatorial, hierarchical, centralised government, frozen together with formalities, but they were only united by His Spirit, governed by His Word, and melted together in love, with an absolute minimum of supervision by the apostles. Their unity was in the Spirit and in Love and in Doctrine, not in highly technical organisation.

Neither Peter nor Paul were popes, dictating every move. They were too busy running around doing their own jobs, fighting their own battles, starting their own churches and winning their own disciples.

They could only advise and counsel others from what they themselves had already learned, but the people themselves had to make their own decisions, with the help of the Lord by His Spirit.

[from lecture delivered during the *Jesus Revolution* era, 1974]

In the past a decision like this might have come via the proclamation of a prophet, but the New Testament church employed more deliberation and counsel; this probably helped the church to make better well-rounded decisions with a wider basis of support and understanding.

V 3-4 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.

On their way to Jerusalem and in Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas and company testified of *"the conversion of the Gentiles"* and *"they caused great joy to all the brethren".*

V 5 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."

In Jerusalem all was going well until *"some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up"*, and then it came time to get down to business and settle the doctrinal issue that was threatening to split the Church. About 10 years earlier the apostle Peter had a remarkable and direct revelation that the Gentiles should be received without circumcision or keeping the Law of Moses, and the apostles and elders had given their assent to this (in Acts 10). However, there had arisen in the meantime this *"sect"* of Pharisee believers who persisted in teaching that circumcision was a necessary condition for salvation.

V 6-7 Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.
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.

After there had been *"much dispute",* Peter, whose authority was much respected, got up and gave a strong defense of salvation by grace through faith alone. He testified of the salvation of Cornelius and his household, for which God did not require circumcision, keeping the law, or any other ritual. (Acts 10:44-48, 11:17-18)

V 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.

***"Giving them the Holy Spirit."* By doing this, God showed that their salvation was genuine without any need for legalistic requirements. *"Even as He did unto us."* The Jews were the first of God's children to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. But just as children must learn not to be selfish with their toys or conceited about their status, so the Jews had to learn they couldn't be exclusive nor begrudge the Gentiles being given the same favor from God that they had enjoyed for generations.**

***"And made no distinction between us and them."* This must have been difficult for some of the Jewish Christians to swallow since they felt their Jewish heritage had earned them higher status before God than the non-Jewish Christians.**

V 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?

“Why do you test God by putting a yoke.” **Peter’s challenge here to the legalists served notice to them about the risks they were taking: testing God’s patience by making Gentiles think that, in order to earn salvation, they would have to keep the laws of Moses. This was a heavy load that even the Jews, who were accustomed to the practices of the law from early childhood, were not *“able to bear”*. To lay such a burden on Gentile believers was almost a form of tyranny and threatened to hinder the spread of the Gospel. And of course, it contradicted what Jesus taught, *“My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”* (Matthew 11:30)**

“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” **(John 1:17) The Laws of Moses had served their purpose to preserve the Jewish nation through centuries of political change and religious turmoil. It was designed to keep a lid on the people, to protect them from the corrupting influences that surrounded them. In those days a person’s righteousness could almost be measured by how diligent he was in following the Law.**

But now, as Paul later wrote, *“I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”* (Galatians 2:21) The Messiah had come. And with the *“grace and truth”* of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, believers were empowered to rise above their carnal nature (which the Law had helped to keep in check) and were driven by God’s love and power to reach the world outside the boundaries of Judaism, rather than hide behind the fortress of the Mosaic Law.

For the Law had its shortcomings. It was a rules-based model which tended to cause its adherents to focus on minor legalities while *“neglecting the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith.”* (Matthew 23:23) Long ago the Lord had said, *“Behold the days are coming… when I will make a new covenant… I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”* (Jeremiah 31:31,33-34)

The Law could only change people by imposing righteousness from without. But that kind of forced righteousness was ineffective when

compared to the *"grace and truth"* of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, by which righteousness would spring from within. *"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."* (John 7:38)

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

***"Through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved."* That was the final summarizing statement. Grace, accepting God's divine favor through Christ, this is the key to Salvation. Working to keep the laws of Moses, although it might be useful in a person's life, would not be enough to earn acceptance with God. Perhaps to the Concision this new idea of salvation by grace would have seemed like a *"yoke"*, but only because it upended their whole sense of righteousness and feelings of superiority that were based on their dutiful keeping of the law.**

> **I didn't need any further big doctrinal arguments to convince me [about salvation by grace through faith], and I couldn't figure out why Paul had to spend so much time harping on the issue with the Jews until I got to Israel and had this revelation from the Lord. Paul knew his Jews! Even we modern Jewish Christians have always had the feeling we had a slight edge on the rest of the Christians! God had just a little bit more preference for us – just a little more respect of persons in our case, that we were just a little more Christian than any other kind since we had our salvation from both directions. Even though it plainly says, *"There's neither Jew nor Greek in Christ Jesus"*, that we're all one and all equal in Him, we Jewish Christians have always felt a little elite, for whom all other Christians should be very thankful and give due deference! Even the fanatically Jewish apostle Paul seems to have a hint of a hangover along this Jewish advantage kick in some places, but I guess we'll have to forgive him for it. Just as we'll have to forgive the rest of the Jewish Christians for their "behold, I am a Jewish Christian" attitude, because there's no difference, except they were the first to hear and believe, first in chronology, in time, not in preference or prestige. – Which is what is meant by the phrase *"to the Jew first."* [Romans 1:16,2:10] Their advantage was purely chronological and geographical, not in any way spiritual! [from**

lecture delivered during the *Jesus Revolution* era, 1971]

V 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.

***"Then all the multitude kept silent"* after Peter's talk. *"And listened to Barnabas and Saul."* The two apostles took the floor again *"declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles."* Their testimonies confirmed the truth of Peter's declaration, and after this nobody cared to argue the matter any further.**

V 13 And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me:

Then it came James' turn to offer his contribution to the debate. Like Peter, James' authority was much respected. (He was head of the Jerusalem church and the Lord's half-brother.) He was able to give a solid foundation to the whole issue by explaining it from the viewpoint of the Word.

V 14-17 "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.'

James refers to a Scripture (Amos 9:11-12), saying that God *"will rebuild the tabernacle of David… So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles, who are called by My name"*. From this Scripture (and many others), it is obvious that God's plan was to enlarge the *"tabernacle of David"* so that the future Kingdom of God on Earth would not be a Jews-only paradise but would include the Gentiles.

Significantly, no mention is made in that Scripture about becoming Jewish converts. The coming of Christ was the event that restored *"the tabernacle of David"* ; it had *"fallen down"* during Old Testament times, but in the days of the Early Church, the *"house of David"* had become vibrant again and capable now of reaching out to the rest of mankind.

V 18-19 "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,

***"Known to God from eternity are all His works."* It's like saying, "God knows what He's doing, so who are we to insist on following our plan as if we know better than God?"**

***"Trouble"* means "to throw something in the path of someone to annoy them." The Judaizers were to cease from troubling and annoying the Gentile converts. And so ended for the time being the struggle between the two opposing views on what was required of mankind to find salvation and acceptance with God.**

> **The most raging religious controversy the world has ever known has always been between the do-it-yourself religions and the God-alone-can-save-you kind. Man has always been trying to save himself with just a little help from God thrown in, so he doesn't have to thank God too much but can give himself most of the credit, and do his own thing and go his own way.**
>
> **This was the biggest church fight amongst the early Christians: whether you could just believe and be saved, or didn't you have to keep the law too, to make it? The Jewish Christians just couldn't help but believe that Jews were a little bit better than Gentiles, even amongst Christians. "Sure, we believe that Jesus is the Messiah," they said, "but we still have to help Him save us by keeping the old Law…"**
>
> **[from lecture delivered during the *Jesus Revolution* era, 1971]**

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

***"Write to them to abstain from."* James and the others had legitimate**

concerns. Since Jew and Gentile would work together a lot more in the future, there needed to be some give and take. If Jews were not going to impose their laws of Moses and circumcision, then it was only fair that Gentiles refrain from some of their more extreme practices. He lists four major pagan violations of the laws of Moses that Jews would find particularly offensive.

"Things polluted by idols." **Food offered to idols would be sold later in temple butcher shops. Anything to do with idolatry, especially consuming such foods, was particularly repulsive to Jews.**

"Sexual immorality." **Or "fornication" (KJV). This applied likely to associating with temple prostitutes and engaging in the orgies and sexual rites associated with the worship of pagan gods.**

"Things strangled, and from blood." **These were dietary restrictions of the Jews. If anything was strangled, the blood had not drained from it. The Jews were particularly conscious about eating blood. All the way back in Noah's day God had commanded, *"But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood."* (Gen 9:4) Since blood is the life of the flesh, it was given symbolic significance by the Lord, and it was through the shedding of blood in sacrifices that atonement for sins could be received. So eating blood – which was (and still is) a common practice in witchcraft – was a particularly strong prohibition in the Old Testament. There were also underlying health benefits to this practice, so, just from that point of view, it was a good rule to follow.**

V 21 "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

"Moses… throughout many generations." **It seems James was saying there was no need to promote the Mosaic law any more than was already being done. If anyone felt they needed to know about it, there were already plenty of preachers *"in every city… in the synagogues every Sabbath day"* to whom they could listen.**

In his role as an administrator (of the Jerusalem church), James seemed able to analyze the situation fairly quickly and proposed a practical and workable solution to the growing crisis in the church.

V 22 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.

"Judas… and Silas." **Not much is known of Judas. Silas accompanied Paul on his next missionary journey and later worked as Peter's scribe for his first epistle. (1 Peter 5:12) The Jerusalem church had made sure to send their best people – *"leading men among the brethren"* – with Paul and Barnabas.**

V 23 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:**

"Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia." **Antioch was the capital of the areas of Syria and Cilicia, which were administered as a single Roman district. The churches in Cilicia (near to Tarsus) may have been founded by Paul after he fled Jerusalem. (Acts 9:30)**

V 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 –**

"Troubled." **A different Greek word from the one used in verse 19; it means "to deeply upset, disturb, perplex, or create fear". *"Unsettling"* was used in Greek to speak of someone going bankrupt. Words are real things, and this false doctrine of the Concision was no small matter as it was already creating chaos in the Church. It had the potential to bankrupt the Gentiles' faith and service for the Lord, to create fear and uncertainty during those impressionable, early stages of their new-found faith.**

> **For a few years as a young Christian I, too, was deceived by the delusive doctrine of… off-again, on-again, gone-again, eternal insecurity of the believer, and… religion of works, until one day as a**

teenager I was thrilled to discover the simple truth of John 3:36. After years of insecurity and lack of assurance, discouragement and defeat I found all I had to do was believe, and that did it! *"He that believeth on the Son hath Everlasting Life."* – right now! – No if's, and's, or but's about it… none of this sinless perfection of the sanctimonious self-righteous, holier-than-thou, so-called holiness saints! I just hadn't been able to make it, and I knew it! It seemed like the harder I tried to be good, the worse I got! *"Oh, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* [Rom 7:24-25] And that's all there is to that – nothing else, no other way, no righteousness of your own, none of your own good works. – None of these can keep you saved any more than they can save you in the first place! Only Jesus can do it! He not only saves you, but He also does the works through you – and it's all Jesus – none of your damn self or your own stinking self-righteousness – just Jesus! And boy was I relieved, 'cause I knew I could never make it otherwise! It had to be God! I just couldn't do it! – So He did! That's it! [from lecture delivered during the *Jesus Revolution* era, 1971]

V 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.**

***"Risked their lives."* As in Acts 13:50 and 14:19-20. The dangers they went through for the sake of spreading the Gospel had proven their faith and gave Paul and Barnabas a certain degree of righteous authority that the false teachers could not claim to have. In 1Corinthians 11:23-27 Paul lists the many perils and hardships he had to endure for the sake of the Gospel during his lifetime.**

V 27-29

**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.

"You will do well." **In other words, these were just recommendations, good advice, that was all; they were not meant to be viewed as conditions for salvation.**

V 30-35 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. 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.

"They were sent off." **Paul and Barnabas, Judas and Silas journeyed to Antioch – the beginning of Paul's second missionary journey – and *"delivered the letter"* with its happy news of the Jerusalem church's unanimous and official judgment in favor of salvation by grace, and the Antioch disciples *"rejoiced over its encouragement".***

"Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also." **Like Paul and Barnabas, Judas and Silas were *"prophets"*, a word which in the New Testament came to mean more than just a foreteller of future events but one who is an inspired teacher, evangelist, or "public expounder" (*Young's Concordance*).**

"Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch… with many others also." **This may have been the time when the apostle Peter made his Antioch visit, the one mentioned in the Book of Galatians. Shortly before this trip, Peter's timely intervention at the Jerusalem conference had succeeded in turning the tide in favour of Barnabas and Paul and their stand on salvation by grace without the works of the Mosaic law. (verses 7-11) But here in Antioch, it appears that Peter waffled in his convictions. For when**

the Judaizers showed up – supposedly sent from James – Peter seemed to want to return to his old comfort zone.

By disregarding the new social situation he was now in, Peter wound up behaving in such a way that it looked as if he was supporting the Judaizers' legalistic stance (that to attain salvation it was necessary to be circumcised and keep the works of the law). Paul makes mention of this incident in Galations: *"for before certain men came from James, he* [Peter] *would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision."* (Galatians 2:12) Peter was allowing himself to be pulled into the camp of the Judaizers instead of upholding the policy towards the Gentiles that the church had agreed on not very long ago.

Herein we learn something about the price of leadership: every action is observed and copied by others, and *"you are not your own",* but *"you were bought at a price."* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) Because of Peter's reputation, any deviation from the straight and narrow could tend to have an outsized negative influence in the church. And as a result of his careless conduct, *"the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy."* (Galatians 2:13)

Since it was such an important issue at the time in the Early Church, Paul had no choice but to publicly admonish Peter about the matter: " [Paul] *said to Peter before them all… Why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"* **(verse 14) We all have our dark moments that we would rather forget if we could – Paul had his share of those as well – and for Peter this was no doubt one of them. But such "intolerable compliments" can have the great benefit of helping to keep us humble and steering us back on the right track.**

Peter did indeed take the admonishment well and did not harbor any grudge against Paul. (2Peter 3:15) It seems also he didn't hang around in Jerusalem any more after this. At least we know that when Paul returned some years later (Acts 21), James was there, but it seems Peter had left. Perhaps too much association with the Jerusalem church had taken its toll over the years, and it took this incident in Antioch to precipitate a much-needed change in Peter's life.

> **(*Jesus speaking in prophecy:*) When you compromise, when you don't stand up for what you know is right, it's often because of Lethargy. When you don't do what you know you should, and you choose to just go along with the flow of what's happening because you don't want to deal with the repercussions, that's Lethargy… Lethargy silences your resolve to stand up and be counted…**

It seems that Peter was probably trying to avoid such "repercussions" – criticism, even hostility – from the legalists by disassociating himself from the Gentiles.

> ***(Jesus speaking:)* The danger with long-term service for Christians is that of allowing their life to go into remote control…**
>
> **Lethargy is one of the long-term weapons that the Enemy tries to use on Christians to wear them down and cool off their lifelong service for Me. – To get them to settle down, lose the urgency and the fire of their service, to become comfortable and laid-back. But My Spirit never grows old. Though your flesh may grow old, My Spirit never ages; it's always the same. When you have My Spirit in you, then the things I inspire and empower you to do are as exciting and fresh and alive and electric as the day you got saved!**
>
> **The secret is to stay plugged in and moving with the heat and fire of My Spirit! If you do, you will never cool off or give in or succumb to the hazards of long-term service, whether it's lethargy or tiredness or burnout or cooling off…**
>
> **(inspired by the *Jesus Revolution* – November, 2003)**

V 36 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."

***"Let us… visit our brethren in every city… and see how they are doing."* It was vital to consolidate their gains, that is, follow-up on their newly-won brethren and continue to teach and strengthen them in the faith.**

V 37-39 Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark.

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;

"The contention." **Paul and Barnabas had a falling out over the issue of John Mark. Barnabas wanted to bring him, his cousin, on the next journey, whereas Paul no longer trusted him after his desertion in Pamphylia. (13:13) Later it seems Paul and Barnabas reconciled and worked together again in Corinth. (1Corinthians 9:6)**

V 40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God.

"Paul chose Silas." **Silas was a Jew, which gave him access to the synagogues, and was also, like Paul or Barnabas, a Roman citizen, so he was quite free to travel in the Roman empire. Because of his reputation as a respected leader in the Jerusalem church, Silas could help to reinforce Paul's teaching (that was under attack in those days) of salvation by grace through faith.**

V 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

"Strengthening the churches." **Again, they *"went through Syria and Cilicia"* to continue the important task of following up on and strengthening their new disciples.**



Map of Second Missionary Journey

(Continue to ACTS, chapter 16)