

CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS 15

Ver. 1. *And certain men which came down from Judea*, etc.] To Antioch; they were not sent by the apostles, they came down of “themselves”; who they were, is not certain; that they were “judaizing” Christians, and teachers among them, is plain from the following account: according to Epiphanius^{f728} they were Cerinthus, and some of his followers: these

taught the brethren; the Gentile converts at Antioch, who are styled “brethren”, though they were Gentiles, because they were regenerated by the grace of God, and were of the same faith with the believing Jews, and in the same church state with them at Antioch: and said,

except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses; or custom of Moses, which had been used from the time of Abraham, and was revived and reinforced by Moses; wherefore the Syriac version renders it, “the law of Moses”; (See Gill on “~~John~~ John 7:19”)

ye cannot be saved; these men were not only for retaining circumcision, which was now abolished, but they made it necessary to salvation; which was carrying the matter further than even the unbelieving Jews themselves did, at least some of them: for though indeed it is a notion with them, that no circumcised persons go to hell, but are all saved; and some of them say, that God rejects uncircumcised persons, and brings them down to hell^{f729}; yet others of them speak of the godly among the nations of the world, and of the proselytes of the gate, who keep the seven precepts of Noah, as persons that shall be saved; so Ananias the Jew, preceptor to King Izates, when he signified his great desire to be circumcised, in order to put him off of it, told him, that if he was determined to follow the customs of the Jews, he might worship God without circumcision, which was more peculiar to the Jews than to be circumcised^{f730}.

Ver. 2. *When therefore Paul and Barnabas*, etc.] Who were the ministers of the uncircumcision, and were just returned from preaching the Gospel among the Gentiles, with success, and were advocates for them, being

witnesses of the grace that was bestowed on them, and therefore opposed the sentiments of these men:

and had no small dissension and disputation with them; which was attended with much heat and sharpness, and continued some time, and occasioned much disturbance and uneasiness; nor could the affair be decided and issued: wherefore

they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them; that is, the members of the church at Antioch, taking this matter into consideration, and finding that the difference could not be composed, for the peace of the church, wisely came to a resolution, and made an order, that Paul and Barnabas, with others, as Titus, who went with Paul at this time, as appears from (~~800~~ Galatians 2:1) and some others of the brethren, and it may be also certain, on, the other side of the question; that these

should go up to Jerusalem, unto the apostles and elders, about this question; concerning circumcision, and the necessity of it to salvation, that they might have the sense of James, and Peter, and John, who particularly were at Jerusalem at this time, as appears from (~~415~~ Acts 15:7 ~~800~~ Galatians 2:9) and other apostles that might be there; and also of other ministers of the word, who are called elders. And the church of Jerusalem being the most ancient church, and several of the apostles residing here, who had seen Christ in the flesh, and had received their mission and commission from him, and had been extraordinarily endowed with the Holy Ghost; and here being many other preachers of the Gospel, and there being in a multitude of counsellors safety, the church at Antioch judged it advisable to send to them for counsel and direction; and it becomes churches to assist each other in this way.

Ver. 3. *And being brought on their way by the church*, etc.] That is, either being accompanied by some of the brethren of the church some part of the way, out of respect unto them, or being provided by them with things necessary for their journey; (see ~~503~~ Titus 3:13)

they passed through Phenice and Samaria; which both lay between Syria and Judea; in the former of which places those that were scattered upon the death of Stephen had preached, and a great number were converted and believed in Christ who were Jews, (~~411~~ Acts 11:19) and in the latter Philip the evangelist had preached with much success, (~~405~~ Acts 8:5,12) as

therefore their way to Jerusalem lay through these places, they called upon the brethren as they passed;

declaring the conversion of the Gentiles; in the several places where they had been, as in Syria, Pisidia, Pamphylia, and Lycaonia, how by their ministry they were turned from darkness to light, from Satan unto God, from their superstition and idolatry to the worship of the true God, and to faith in Christ Jesus:

and they caused great joy unto all the brethren; the believing Jews in those parts, who being truly believers in Christ, rejoiced at the spread of his Gospel, and the increase of his interest, even among the Gentiles; for if angels rejoice, much more should saints rejoice at the conversion of sinners, let them be who or where they will; and where there is true grace, there will be joy when this is the case. There were churches in each of these places, of which “the brethren” here mentioned were members, and which continued for many ages afterwards: the foundation of the churches in Phenice was first laid by the converts made by them, who were scattered abroad through the persecution at the death of Stephen, (^{<44119>}Acts 11:19). Quartus, mentioned in (^{<51623>}Romans 16:23) is said to be bishop of Berytus in this country. In the “second” century there were churches at Tyre and Ptolemais, two cities in Phoenicia; Cassius was bishop of the one, and Clarus of the other^{f731}: in the “third” century several Phoenician bishops suffered martyrdom, as Tyrannio, bishop of the church of Tyre, Zenobius, presbyter of that at Sidon, and Sylvanus, bishop of Emisa^{f732}: in the “fourth” century, at the beginning of it, there were present, at the council of Nice, the bishops of Ptolemais, Damascus, Tripolis, Paneas, and Emisa; as they were also at a synod held at Jerusalem in the same century, on account of the Arians, and at another at Antioch on the same account: in the fifth century there were churches in Phoenicia reformed by Chrysostom, by whose means also the temples of the idols were destroyed, and many were converted in these countries; and in this age lived several persons of note here, as Antiochus bishop of Ptolemais, Eustathius bishop of Berytus, Paulus bishop of Emisa, Pompeianus and Uranius of the same place, and Damianus bishop of Sidon, and other Phoenician bishops, who assisted at the council of Chalcedon; as Olympius bishop of Atrapolis, Theodorus bishop of Tripolis, Joseph bishop of Heliopolis, Valerius bishop of Laodicea, Thomas bishop of Euroma, and Theonas bishop of Enria or Enaria, all in Phoenicia: in the sixth century, mention is made of the bishops of Ptolemais, Tyre, Sidon, and Berytus, in the acts of the synod at

Rome and Constantinople; and though Phoenicia was seized upon, and wasted by the Arabians and Persians, in the seventh century; yet we read, in the eighth century, of Adeodatus, a bishop of Berytus, who baptized many converted Jews ^{f733}. As for Samaria, our Lord himself preached and converted many persons there; and after his resurrection he gave his apostles a commission and directions to go there; and here Philip preached with great success. Nicolaus, the deacon, is said to be the first bishop of Samaria; and though in after ages Heathenism very much prevailed in those parts; yet there were Christians and churches, more or less, for several centuries; even in the sixth century there was a bishop of Neapolis in Samaria, killed with the sword, and some presbyters who were taken and fried in a pan, with the remains of some martyrs, by the Samaritan Jews ^{f734}.

Ver. 4. *And when they were come to Jerusalem*, etc.] Paul and Barnabas, and the rest that came from Antioch with them:

they were received of the church; that is, that was at Jerusalem, in a very kind and respectful manner; they were received into their houses, and accommodated with everything convenient for them:

and of the apostles; particularly James, and Cephas, and John, who gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, in token of their approbation of them, affection for them, and agreement with them:

and elders: the other ministers of the Gospel who preached in that place:

and they declared all things that God had done with them: just as they did to the church at Antioch, when they returned from their travels, (see Gill on "~~44:27~~ Acts 14:27"), the Arabic version here adds, as there, "and that God had opened to the Gentiles the door of faith."

Ver. 5. *But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees*, etc.] Which was the strictest sect of religion among the Jews:

which believed; that Jesus was the Messiah, and professed their faith in him, and were members of the church, though they still retained many of their pharisaical tenets, and are therefore said to be of that sect: these rose up in opposition to Paul and Barnabas, as they were relating their success among the Gentiles, and giving an account of the difference that had happened at Antioch, and their own sense of that matter:

saying, that it was needful to circumcise them: the Gentiles that believed:

and to command them to keep the law of Moses; both moral and ceremonial; the observance of which they reckoned was absolutely necessary to salvation. Some think these are not the words of Luke, relating what happened at Jerusalem, when Paul and Barnabas gave in their account of things to the apostles and elders; but that they are a continuation of their account, how that in the controversy raised at Antioch, certain Pharisees that came thither from Judea, rose up and asserted the necessity of the, Gentiles being circumcised, and of their keeping the law of Moses in order to their being saved; which is favoured by the Syriac version, especially by the Latin interpreter of it, who supplies the words thus, “but say they” (i.e. Paul and Barnabas) “there arose men”, etc.

Ver. 6. *And the apostles and elders came together*, etc.] And also the brethren, or private members of the church, even the whole church, as appears from (^{<4152>}Acts 15:22,23). Whether all the apostles were here present, is not certain; Peter, James, and John were; but who else, cannot be said: these met together

for to consider of this matter; to hear what was to be said on both sides of the question, and then to judge what advice was proper to be given to the Gentiles.

Ver. 7. *And when there had been much disputing*, etc.] Pro and con upon this subject; many had spoken; and much had been said, and a great deal of time had been taken up about the thing in controversy:

Peter rose up; not only out of respect to this venerable assembly, but to signify that he had something to say; and he stood up that he might be the better heard. Beza’s ancient copy reads, “rose up in spirit”;

and said unto them, men and brethren: an usual form of address with the Jews; (^{<4110>}Acts 7:2)

ye know how that a good while ago; or “from ancient days”; or “from the beginning”, as the Ethiopic version renders it; from the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel, after the ascension of Christ; quickly after the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost: it is thought, by some, to be ten or eleven, and, by others, to be twenty years ago, or thereabout:

God made choice among us; the apostles; the Alexandrian copy reads, “among you”; the sense is the same, for Peter must be supposed as directing his discourse chiefly to the apostles:

that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel, and believe; referring to the case of Cornelius, and his family: and his sense is, that some years ago it pleased God, in his providence, to single him out from the rest of the apostles, and in a very extraordinary manner to call him to go to Caesarea, and preach the gospel to Cornelius, and those that were in his house, that hearing they might believe in Christ.

Ver. 8. *And God which knoweth the hearts*, etc.] Of all men; he being omniscient, the searcher of the hearts, and the trier of the reins of the children of men, knew with what sincerity Cornelius sent for Peter; and with what vehement desire and longing expectation he and his family and friends waited for his coming; and with what earnestness, diligence, and affection they attended to what he said:

bore them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; God bore a testimony, and showed his well pleasedness in the whole of this affair, by bestowing upon them not only the regenerating and sanctifying grace of the Spirit; but his extraordinary gifts, such as speaking with divers tongues, even in like manner as these were bestowed on the apostles themselves, on the day of Pentecost, though they were uncircumcised persons; for the drift of Peter’s oration is to show, that circumcision was not necessary to salvation.

Ver. 9. *And put no difference between us and them*, etc.] Neither in the extraordinary gifts, nor special grace, of the Spirit; giving them the same graces of faith, hope, and love, admitting to the same privileges and immunities of the house of God, and giving them a right and title to the same inheritance of the saints in light, though the one were circumcised, and the other were not. God puts no difference as to matters of religion under the Gospel dispensation between Jews and Gentiles, neither on account of Abraham’s seed, or of circumcision, or of the ceremonial law, or of national adoption; nor would he have any made with respect to conversation, civil or religious; all which Peter knew full well: nor has he made any difference in his eternal choice of persons to eternal salvation, on any of the above accounts, having ordained Gentiles to eternal life as Jews, who in consequence of it believe in Christ; nor in redemption, Christ having redeemed by his blood men out of every kindred, tongue, people,

and nation; nor in the effectual calling, for they that were called in the first times of the Gospel, were not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also, to whom the Gospel was alike sent, and made effectual to saving purposes: these shared in the same blessings of pardon, justification, and adoption; their sins were forgiven through the same blood, their persons were justified by the same righteousness, and they were taken into the same family, and were no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens of the saints, and of the household of God; having the same access to God, being built on the same foundation, enjoying the same privileges, and having the same hope of eternal glory.

Purifying their hearts by faith; which was done by implanting faith in them, and leading that faith to the blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin, original and actual, with which men are defiled; for faith has not this efficacy in itself, but as it has to do with the blood of Jesus: and this spiritual purification being what answered to circumcision, made that unnecessary; for this is the circumcision of the heart, of which the other was only typical. The hearts of men are filthy, and need purifying; they are originally polluted with sin; this is the case of all men; and this defilement reaches to all the members of the body, and the faculties of the soul; and especially the heart is the seat of this impurity, which God only can cleanse: he promises to do it, and does do it; and he only can do it, men cannot; for though, they are exhorted to it, in order to make them sensible of their pollution, and their need of cleansing, that they may apply where it is to be had, yet it is not in their power to effect it; to make a clean heart is a creation work, which is peculiar to God: the heart cannot be purified, neither by ceremonial ablutions, nor by works of moral righteousness, nor by humiliations and tears, nor by submission to Gospel ordinances, as water baptism, but only by the grace of God, and the blood of Christ; which the Spirit of God sprinkles upon the heart, and which faith looks to and deals with, and so it is freed from an evil conscience; and this blessing the believing Gentiles enjoyed in common with the believing Jews.

Ver. 10. *Now therefore why tempt ye God*, etc.] By hesitating about this matter, by disputing upon this point, and by seeking for further proof and evidence of the will of God in this affair; when it is so plain a case, that it has been his will that the Gospel should be preached to Gentiles, without obliging them to circumcision; that he has given his Spirit both in his extraordinary gifts, and special grace, to uncircumcised persons; particularly he has bestowed faith in Christ upon them, whereby they have

been led to the blood of Christ, typified in circumcision, and are thereby purged from all their filth and pollution, and so are the true circumcision: wherefore it is no other than tempting God, a manifest opposition to him, and what must give him offence, to debate about a point so clear; and especially to attempt

to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. It is common with the Jews to call the law a yoke; frequent mention is made of *aydyqp ryn* and *twxm l w* [, “the yoke of the commandments”^{f735}, and *hrwth l w* [, “the yoke of the law”^{f736}: and by it here is meant, not circumcision only and barely, for that the Jewish fathers had been able to bear, and had bore it; nor the whole ceremonial law only, which consisted of a multitude of commands and ordinances very heavy and hard; but even the whole moral law, which circumcision obliged those who submitted to it to keep it perfectly; (see ~~xxx~~ Galatians 5:3), which neither the apostles, nor their fathers, were ever able to do, nor any mere man whatever; and therefore this yoke was intolerable and insupportable, and not to be put upon the necks of the Gentile believers; who here are called disciples, being taught the doctrine of the Gospel, and the way of salvation; which was not by circumcision, nor by any works of the law, but by the grace of Christ, as in the following verse.

Ver. 11. *But we believe*, etc.] Who are circumcised; the Arabic version adds, “and are sure”; for what follows is a sure and certain article of faith:

that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ; not through circumcision, or by any works of the law, moral or ceremonial; but through the grace of Christ undertaking for them, assuming their nature, and dying in their room and stead; through his redeeming, justifying, and pardoning grace: salvation is by Christ; Jehovah the Father appointed him to be his salvation; he sent him, and he came to save sinners; and he has obtained salvation for them; and it is in him, and in no other: and this salvation is by “the grace” of Christ; it was grace moved him to engage in this work before the world began; it was good will to men that caused him to come down from heaven, and appear on earth in the form of a servant; it was pure love that influenced him to lay down his life for them; through the grace in his heart he did all this for them; and it is the fulness of grace in his hands, out of which they receive abundance, whereby they are entitled to, and are made meet for eternal glory:

we shall be saved, even as they; either as the disciples, the Gentile converts, who without circumcision, and the works of the law, were saved by the pure grace and love of Christ, in dying for them, and on which they alone depended for salvation; or else as the Jewish fathers were, for they were justified, pardoned, accepted, and saved in the same way, as the saints under the New Testament are: they could not keep the law perfectly, nor was there then, nor now, salvation by it, only by the grace of Christ; and in that way, and that only, Old and New Testament believers, Jews and Gentiles, whether circumcised or uncircumcised, are saved. The Gentiles were not saved by the light of nature, nor the Jews by the law of Moses; the one were not lost for want of circumcision, nor the other saved by it; the only way of salvation to both, and under all dispensations, is the Lord Jesus Christ; through whose sacrifice sin is atoned for, through whose blood it is pardoned, through whose righteousness men are justified before God, and are accepted with him; and through whom saints have communion with God; and by whom, and whose grace, and not by their own works, they shall be saved with an everlasting salvation, from sin, law, death, hell, and damnation: and the salvation of one and of another, even of all that are saved, Jews or Gentiles, is by grace; no one is deserving of it; they have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God; have done that which is abominable, and they themselves are abominable in the sight of God; they have destroyed, and cannot help themselves; nor have they anyone good thing but what they have received from the Lord, and therefore ought to ascribe all to his grace; it is by that they are what they are, have what they have, and do what they do. Salvation, in all its parts and branches, is owing to grace; and so it is with respect to all persons that are saved; some are not saved by their works, and others by the grace of Christ, but they are all saved by grace; and none have any room to boast of themselves against others.

Ver. 12. *Then all the multitude kept silence*, etc.] Upon this oration of Peter's, there was a profound silence in the whole assembly, among all the brethren of the church, who were come together on this occasion; they were all satisfied with, and by their silence acquiesced in, what Peter said; and waited to hear what might be further said about this matter, by other persons in the assembly; and even those who were on the other side of the question, were confounded and nonplussed, and knew not what to say, and the more so, when they perceived that the rest of the apostles and elders were of the same mind; for Beza's most ancient copy introduces this clause

thus; “then the elders agreeing to the things that were said by Peter, the whole multitude was silent”: and this gave Paul and Barnabas an opportunity of being heard; who, perhaps, could not so well be heard before, for the clamour of the people against them, who might not have so good an opinion of them, and of their practices:

and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul; Barnabas is mentioned first, he being most known to the Jews, and of whom they might have the better opinion; and who probably gave the account of their proceedings and success among the Gentiles:

declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them; what wonders of grace were wrought in the conversion of multitudes of them, wherever they came; and what miracles in nature were wrought for the confirmation of the Gospel, such as the striking blind Elymas the sorcerer, at Paphos in Cyprus, and curing the cripple at Lystra; and which they ascribe not to themselves but to God, whose instruments they only were.

Ver. 13. *And after they had held their peace*, etc.] Meaning not the multitude, but Paul and Barnabas; when they had finished their account, and had done speaking:

James answered; or rose up, as the Syriac version reads, he stood up and began to speak. This was James the son of Alphaeus, one of the twelve apostles, sometimes called the brother of the Lord; for the other James, the son of Zebedee and brother of John, was dead, being killed by Herod, (^{<4112>}Acts 12:2) but this was the brother of Jude, and the same that wrote the epistle that bears his name: whether he was now bishop or pastor of the church at Jerusalem, is not certain; nor whether he was president in this council; the speeches made in it do not appear to be directed to him: he began his oration thus,

saying, men and brethren, hearken to me; the titles he uses, and the manner of desiring audience, were what were common with the Jews; (see ^{<4114>}Acts 2:14,22,29, 7:2).

Ver. 14. *Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles*, etc.] James begins with taking notice of Peter’s speech, and agrees to it, and confirms it; for by Simeon is not meant, as some have thought, the Simeon that took Christ in his arms, (^{<4125>}Luke 2:25) who had been dead long ago; but Simon Peter, who had spoken before. Simon and Simeon are

one and the same name; the former is only a contraction of the latter in the Syriac language; Simeon was his pure Hebrew name, and James speaking to an assembly of Hebrews, uses it; and observes, that he had given a very clear and distinct narrative, how God at the first preaching of the Gospel, quickly after the day of Pentecost, was pleased to look upon the Gentiles, and show favour to them, and visit them in a way of grace and mercy, by sending the Gospel to them, and his Spirit to make it effectual: this was a gracious visit; he came and looked upon them, quickened them, and spoke comfortably to them, and bestowed special favours upon them; the set time for such a visit being come: the Arabic version renders it, “how God first promised”; referring to the promises concerning the calling of the Gentiles, which James afterwards confirms by citing a passage out of the prophets to the same purpose: the Syriac version, “how God began to choose out of the Gentiles”: that is, by calling them by his grace; and the Ethiopic version, “how God first had mercy on the Gentiles”; who before had not obtained mercy:

to take out of them a people for his name; for himself, for his own glory, to call upon his name, and to be called by his name, to bear his name, and support his Gospel, cause and interest: the distinguishing grace of God may be seen herein; it was grace to visit them, to look upon them, when for many hundreds of years he had overlooked them, he had taken no notice of them; and it was distinguishing grace to take some out of them, to be a special and peculiar people to himself; to separate them from the rest by his powerful and efficacious grace, and form them into a church state, that they might show forth his praise and glorify him.

Ver. 15. *And to this agree the words of the prophets*, etc.] In several of the prophecies of the Old Testament, which plainly speak of the calling of the Gentiles; though James thought it sufficient to produce only one instead of many:

as it is written; in (^{<3091>}Amos 9:11,12) and this is agreeably to the Jewish way of citing Scriptures, as Surenhusius observes; so it is said ¹⁷³⁷, in twenty four places the priests are called Levites, and this is one of them, (^{<3445>}Ezekiel 44:15) where only one place is mentioned, instead of the twenty four.

Ver. 16. *After this I will return*, etc.] That is, after the Lord had destroyed the sinful kingdom from off the face of the earth, and had sifted the house of Israel among all nations, and the sinners of his people were slain with

the sword; after all this he promises to return and show favour to them: this is the sense of the prophet which James gives; for these words are not at length in Amos; there it is only said, “in that day”; upon which Jarchi’s note is,

“after all these things shall have come upon them, that day shall come which is appointed for redemption;”

which well agrees with James here, and the manner in which he introduces this passage:

and will build again the tabernacle of David, that is fallen down: that is, as the Jewish ^{f738} writers themselves interpret it, the kingdom of the house of David, though in a temporal sense, which was now in a most ruinous condition; the sceptre was departed from Judah; all; power and authority were falling off apace from the Jews, into the hands of the Romans; David’s family were quite sunk, and almost gone, and had no share at all in the civil government; Jesus, who was descended from him, and was of the blood royal, and right heir to his throne, was born of a poor virgin; and his supposed father was a carpenter; and he himself the King of the Jews, was crucified by them; yet notwithstanding all this, David’s tabernacle was to be rebuilt, and his kingdom to be restored by the Messiah, but in a spiritual way; for the tabernacle of David designs the spiritual kingdom or church of Christ, who is here called David, as in (²³²³ Ezekiel 34:23,24, 37:24,25 ²³⁸⁵ Hosea 3:5) and of whom David was an eminent type: and the church may be called a tabernacle, being in the present state of things, as to its place, uncertain and moveable, though ere long it will be a tabernacle that will not be taken down, (²³³⁰ Isaiah 33:20) and Christ’s tabernacle, being of his building, and where he dwells and keeps his court, as King of saints; (see ²³⁶⁵ Isaiah 16:5) and which was in a fallen ruinous condition when he came on earth, through the corrupt principles of the Pharisees and Sadducees, the bigotry and superstition of the one, and the deism of the other; and through the great decay of spiritual worship and powerful godliness, and the bad lives of professors, and the small number of truly godly persons: the Jews ^{f739} themselves refer this prophecy to the times of the Messiah, yea, one of the names by which they call the Messiah is taken from hence ^{f740}: it is asked,

“who is Bar Naphli? it is replied, the Messiah; the Messiah is called Bar Naphli (the son fallen, or of the fallen); is it not written, “in that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen down?””

one of their own commentators ^{f741} on this text, has this note,

“if we interpret this of the Messiah, the matter is clear:”

but then this must be understood in a spiritual sense, for Christ’s kingdom is not a worldly one; the raising up and rebuilding of this tabernacle, must design the reviving of true religion, the doctrine and practice of it, the enlargement of the church of God, by the conversion both of Jews and Gentiles:

and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; which has been done by breaking down the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, and letting in the latter into the Gospel church with the former, whereby it grows up to be an holy temple in the Lord; (see ^{<350>}Isaiah 54:2,3 61:4,5 2:2) and to this sense the Jews themselves ^{f742} interpret it;

“the holy blessed God will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, as it is said, (^{<309>}Amos 9:11) in that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David; for all the world shall be *tj a hdwga*, “one bundle”; as it is said, (^{<308>}Zephaniah 3:9)”

Ver. 17. *That the residue of men might seek after the Lord*, etc.] The rebuilder and proprietor of this tabernacle, and who dwells in it; that is, attend his worship, pray unto him, and seek unto him for life and salvation: in Amos these are called, “the remnant of Edom”: and design the remnant according to the election of grace among the Gentiles; the Jews generally call all other nations, and especially the Roman empire, Edom:

and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called; for God is the God of the whole earth, of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews; and his Gospel was now spread among them, and many of them were converted and called Christians, and the children and people of God: the Jews ^{f743} understand this of the people of Israel, who are called by the name of the Lord, or on whom his name is called; and some think the words are to be transposed ^{f744} thus,

“that Israel on whom my name is called might possess the remnant of Edom, and all the people;”

and is true of their possessing or enjoying them in a Gospel church state:

saith the Lord, who doth all these things; raises up the tabernacle of David, revives the interest of religion, resettles the church, and increases it, calls

and converts the Gentiles, causes them to seek after the Lord, and unites them in one church state with the Jews; the word “all” is left out in the Alexandrian copy, and in the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions, and is not in Amos.

Ver. 18. *Known unto God are all his works*, etc.] These are the words of James, and not of Amos; all the things which God does in the church and in the world, they were all foreknown and predetermined by him: from the beginning of the world; or from eternity; even all his works of creation, providence and grace: the Alexandrian copy, and Beza’s most ancient copy, and the Vulgate Latin version, read in the singular number, “his work”; the work of the conversion of the Gentiles; this was fixed and resolved on by God in eternity; he knew it would be, because he had determined it should be; and accordingly he foretold it, and spoke of it in various periods of time before it came to pass; and therefore it should not be looked upon as some new and strange thing, that was never known, spoken or heard of: and this holds true of every other work of God, and agrees with what the Jews sometimes say^{f745}, that “every work which is renewed in the world, the holy blessed God has commanded (or ordered) it from the day the world was created.”

Ver. 19. *Wherefore my sentence is*, etc.] Opinion or judgment in this case, or what he reckoned most advisable to be done; for he did not impose his sense upon the whole body, but proposed it to them:

that we trouble not them; by obliging them to be circumcised, which would have been very afflicting and disturbing to them; not only because of the corporeal pain produced by circumcision, but because of the bondage their minds would be brought into, and they become subject to the whole law, and all its burdensome rites and ceremonies:

which from among the Gentiles are turned to God; the one true and living God, Father, Son, and Spirit, and from idols, and the worshipping of them.

Ver. 20. *But that we write unto them*, etc.] Or send an epistle to them, to this effect, concerning the following things:

that they abstain from pollutions of idols; that is, from eating things offered to idols; (see ^{<4152>}Acts 15:29) for not idolatry, or the worshipping of idols itself, is here spoken of; for that was no indifferent thing; and besides, these converted Gentiles were turned from that, and there was no danger of their returning to it; but eating things sacrificed to idols was an

indifferent thing; but yet inasmuch as it had a tendency to lead to idolatry, and gave offence to the Jewish believers in the churches, and was a stumbling block to weak minds, who by the example of stronger Christians, were led to eat them as sacrificed to an idol, and so their weak consciences were defiled, therefore it was very proper to abstain from them;

and from fornication; not spiritual fornication or idolatry, but fornication taken in a literal sense, for the carnal copulation of one single person with another, and which is commonly called simple fornication: the reason why this is put among, things indifferent is, not that it was so in itself, but because it was not thought to be criminal by the Gentiles, and was commonly used by them, and which must be offensive to the believing Jews, who were better acquainted with the will of God; this is omitted in the Ethiopic version:

and from things strangled; that is; from eating them, and design such as die of themselves, or are torn with beasts, or are not killed in a proper way, by letting out their blood; but their blood is stagnated or congealed in the veins: the Jews might not kill with a reaper's sickle, nor with a saw, nor with the teeth, or nail; because these ^yqmwj, "strangled"^{f746}: and what was not slain as it should be, was reckoned all one as what dies of itself; and whoever ate of either of these was to be beaten^{f747}; the law respecting these things was of the ceremonial kind, and peculiar to the Jews, and was not binding upon the Gentiles; for that which died of itself might be given to a stranger, and he might eat it, or it might be sold to an alien, (⁽⁻⁶¹⁴⁾Deuteronomy 14:21) this has been wanting in many copies, and it was not read by several of the ancient fathers:

and from blood: which is not to be understood of the blood of men and shedding of that, which is of a moral nature; but of the blood of beasts, and of eating of that. There were several laws about eating of blood, and which are different, and ought to be carefully distinguished. The first is in (⁽⁻⁰⁰⁰⁾Genesis 9:4) "but flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat"; which forbids the eating of flesh with the blood; but not the eating of flesh separately, nor the eating of blood separately, provided they were properly prepared and dressed, but the eating of them together without any preparation. As this was the first hint to man that we know of, that he might eat flesh, it was proper that the manner in which he should eat it, should be suggested to him; that he should not take the creature alive and eat it, or tear off any of its members and eat it whilst

alive, or eat raw flesh; but should prepare it by roasting or boiling, or some way, in which it might become proper food: and it is the constant sense of the Jewish synagogue ^{f748}, that this law is to be understood of the member of a living creature, torn from it, and eaten whilst alive; six commands, the Jews say, were given to the first man Adam, the first five forbid idolatry, blasphemy, shedding of blood, uncleanness, and theft, or robbery, and the sixth required judgment against offenders; to these were added, for the sons of Noah, a seventh, which forbid the eating of the member of a living creature, as it is said, (^{<0094>}Genesis 9:4) ^{f749}. So that this law has nothing to do with eating of blood, simply considered, and no more forbids eating of it separately, than it does eating of flesh separately: in like manner is the law in (^{<0123>}Deuteronomy 12:23) to be understood, and is so interpreted by the Jewish writers ^{f750}: another law is in (^{<0196>}Leviticus 19:26) “ye shall not eat anything with the blood”; which according to our version, seems to be the same law with the former, but is not; for it is not said here, as before, **b**, “in”, or “with”, but **l** [, “upon”, “over”, or “by” the blood. This is differently understood: some think the sense is, that no one should eat of the sacrifices, before the sprinkling of the blood upon the altar ^{f751}; or until it stands or is congealed in the basons ^{f752}; others, that it is a caution to judges, that they do not eat until they have finished judgment; for whoever judges or passes sentence after he has eat and drank, is as if he was guilty of blood ^{f753}: another observes ^{f754}, that next to this clause, it is said, “neither shall ye use enchantment”; meaning that they should not use enchantment by eating, in the way that murderers do, who eat bread over the slain, that the avengers of the slain may not take vengeance on them; this author smells something superstitious or diabolical in this matter; and indeed this is the case; the truth of the matter is, it refers to a practice among the Heathens, who fancied that blood was the food of the demons, to whom they sacrificed; and therefore when they sacrificed to them, they took the blood of the beast and put it into a vessel, and sat down by it, and round about it, and ate the flesh; imagining that whilst they ate the flesh, the demons eat the blood, and by this means friendship and familiarity were contracted between them; so that they hoped to receive some advantage from them, and be informed of things to come ^{f755}. Hence, this law is placed with others against enchantments and observing times, to which may be added, (^{<0135>}Ezekiel 33:25) “ye eat with the blood”, or “over it”, or “by” it; “and lift up your eyes to your idols”: which is to be understood in the same light, and with these compare (^{<0142>}1 Samuel 14:32 ^{<0178>}Leviticus 17:3-7). But besides these, there was a third law, which is frequently repeated,

(~~CR17~~ Leviticus 3:17 7:26,27 17:10-12) which absolutely forbids the eating of blood, as well as fat; the Jews except the blood of fishes, and locusts, and creeping things, and the blood of men, and the blood that is in eggs, and that which is squeezed out of flesh, or drops from it, which a man may eat and not be guilty of the breach of this law^{f756} the reason of this law was, because the blood, which is the life, was given in sacrifice for the life of men, to be an atonement for them; wherefore, to keep up a just reverence of the sacrifice, and to direct to the blood of the great sacrifice of the Messiah, blood was forbidden to be eaten, till that sacrifice was offered up; and then that blood itself was to be spiritually eaten by faith: and now if eating of blood in general was morally evil in itself, it would be a monstrous shocking thing in the Christian religion, that the blood of Christ is to be drank; though it be to be understood in a spiritual sense: the law against eating blood was very strictly enjoined the Jews, and severely punished; whoever ate of blood, but the quantity of an olive, if he ate it wilfully, was guilty of cutting off; if ignorantly, he was to bring a sin offering^{f757}: James knew that the breach of this law would give great offence to the Jews, and therefore for the peace of the church he moves that the Gentiles might be wrote to, to abstain from blood; and which was agreed to and done: and this was attended to with much strictness by the primitive Christians, who seemed to have observed this advice in the form of a law, and thought it criminal to eat blood; but in process of time it was neglected; and in Austin's time abstinence from blood was derided, as a ridiculous notion; and it is at least now high time that this, and everything else of a ceremonial kind, was dropped by Christians; though where the peace of the brethren is in danger, this, and everything of an indifferent nature should be abstained from: Beza's ancient copy adds, "and whatsoever they would not have done to themselves, do not unto others"; and so two of Stephens's: the Ethiopic version is, "whatsoever they hate should be done to themselves, let them not do to their brethren".

Ver. 21. *For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him,* etc.] That is, for many years past, even from the times of Ezra, the law of Moses has been publicly expounded by them, whom the Jews call Derashim, preachers, or expounders, in every city where there was a synagogue; and every city belonging to the Jews, were obliged to build a synagogue, yea, they were obliged to do it where there were but ten Israelites^{f758}: this is given by James as a reason why the Gentiles should be wrote unto concerning the above things; because that they hearing the law

read and expounded every week, would be ready to conclude that they were obliged to submit unto it, as to circumcision, and other things; unless they were told that they were free from it; only in order to maintain peace with their brethren the Jews, it would be necessary for them to abstain from the above things: and it may also carry in it a reason, why the Jews need not be wrote unto, and why they had no reason to complain for thus writing to the Gentiles; since they had the law read and explained to them every week, and there would be no attempt to make any alteration in that form of service:

being read in the synagogues every sabbath day; (See Gill on “⁴¹³⁵Acts 13:15”).

Ver. 22. *Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church,* etc.] The opinion, judgment, and advice of James, being approved of by the whole body of the apostles, ministers, and brethren of the church assembled together on this occasion; they unanimously agreed,

to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas; that is, they thought fit to choose some persons from among themselves, out of that assembly, or who were members of the church at Jerusalem; and send them to Antioch, where the difference began, along with Paul and Barnabas, to give an account of the sense of the apostles, elders, and brethren, about the affair in controversy, and what was their advice upon the whole: and the rather they took this step, to prevent all suspicion of Paul and Barnabas giving a partial account, or putting a wrong turn upon the sentiments of this assembly, they being parties concerned on one side, wherefore they thought fit to send some indifferent persons along with them, to confirm their narrative, and to compose differences among them, and to bring back an account of the state of the church:

namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas; (See Gill on “⁴¹²³Acts 1:23”)

and Silas, the same with Sylvanus:

chief men among the brethren, leading men among them, who went before them, were guides to them, in doctrine and discipline; for these were prophets or preachers, as appears from (⁴¹⁵²Acts 15:32) and these they pitched upon, partly out of respect to Paul and Barnabas, as being suitable companions for them, and partly out of respect to the church at Antioch, and chiefly because of their ability, and capacity, for such service they were sent upon.

Ver. 23. *And wrote letters by them after this manner*, etc.] Not that they made use of them as their amanuenses, to write their letters for them; but being written they put them into their hands, and sent them by them, and they were written in the following form:

the apostles, and elders, and brethren; which belonged to, or were members of the church at Jerusalem; they are severally set in their proper place and order: the apostles, Peter, and James, and John, and it may be some others first; for these God had set in the first place in the church; then the elders, or preachers of the Gospel, such as were Judas and Silas: and then the brethren, or private members of the church; who are called so, because they are of one family, and have one Father, and are partakers of the same grace and privileges: these,

send greeting; or their Christian salutation, wishing all peace and prosperity, both for soul and body, temporal, spiritual and eternal:

unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria and Cilicia; the brethren or members of the several churches in these parts, who were Gentiles, are particularly sent to; and not the brethren who were Jews; because they were especially concerned, and to them is the advice directed: Antioch is first mentioned, that being the place where the controversy began; but there being other churches in Syria, besides Antioch, in which were many Gentiles, and also in Cilicia, and particularly at Tarsus, Paul's native place, and where he had preached, (^{<410>}Acts 9:30, ^{<402>}Galatians 1:21) they are therefore mentioned, and being countries near to one another, it is very likely that the controversy had spread itself among them.

Ver. 24. *Forasmuch as we have heard*, etc.] By the report of Paul and Barnabas, who were sent by the church at Antioch to Jerusalem, to acquaint them with the state of their case:

that certain which went out from us; (^{<410>}Acts 15:1)

have troubled you with words, or doctrines:

subverting your souls; removing them from the doctrine of grace to another Gospel, and which deserved not the name of a Gospel; and was very destructive to their souls, at least to the peace and comfort of them: this shows what an opinion the apostles, and elders, and members of the church at Jerusalem had of these "judaizing" preachers, and their tenets;

they looked upon them as troublers of God's Israel, and upon their doctrines as subversive of spiritual joy and comfort.

Saying, ye must be circumcised and keep the law; the ceremonial law; the Alexandrian copy, and the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions leave out this clause; (see Gill on "~~4150~~Acts 15:1"), (see Gill on "~~4155~~Acts 15:5").

to whom we gave no such commandment: it looks as if these "judaizing preachers" not only pretended to be sent out by the apostles, to preach; but that they had particularly this in their instructions from them, that they should insist upon it, that the Gentiles that were received into the churches, should be circumcised, and be obliged to keep the other parts of the ceremonial law, when they had no such orders from them.

Ver. 25. *It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord,* etc.] Or together; in one place, as the Vulgate Latin and Arabic versions render it; (see ~~4100~~Acts 2:1) though certain it is, that as they were in one place, so they were in one mind; and their unanimity was proper to be mentioned, in order to engage a regard to their advice:

to send men chosen unto you; men chosen for this purpose; namely, Judas and Silas:

with our beloved Barnabas and Paul; who are commended thus, partly to express their affection to them; and partly to observe the wisdom of the church at Antioch, in sending two such agreeable persons; and chiefly to testify their approbation of the doctrine and conduct of these two men.

Ver. 26. *Men that have hazarded their lives,* etc.] As at Antioch, in Pisidia, where a persecution was raised against them, and they were expelled out of the coasts of that place; and at Lystra, where Paul was stoned, and left for dead, (~~4155~~Acts 13:50, 14:19) and this they did, not for any sinister and selfish ends, for any worldly gain, or vain glory, and popular applause, but

for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; for the sake of his Gospel, and the enlargement of his interest, and kingdom in the world; and therefore were worthy of esteem, and ought to be regarded and attended to, and greatly to be preferred to false teachers; who only sought themselves, their worldly honour, and ease, and would sacrifice nothing, nor hazard anything, for the sake of Christ.

Ver. 27. *We have sent therefore Judas and Silas*, etc.] The chosen men before mentioned,

who shall also tell you the same things by mouth; as are written in these letters; which would both confirm and explain things unto them.

Ver. 28. *For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us*, etc.] By various things they had reason doubtless to conclude, that they were under the influence and direction of the Holy Ghost in this affair; as by the spirit of prayer that was among them; by that power and energy with which many of them spoke on this occasion, and that so agreeable to the word of God; and by that unanimity with which they came into the advice given. With respect to the form here used, compare (^{<433D>}1 Chronicles 13:2) and the Targum on it, which renders the words thus;

“if it be beautiful before you, and acceptable before the Lord, let us send, etc.”

It follows here,

to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; not that they were necessary to salvation, but necessary to secure the peace of the churches, and at least were necessary, at that present time; and therefore since it appeared to be necessary to enjoin them for the present, they hoped they would not refuse to bear them; and especially, since, though they must own they were burdens, and a part of the yoke of bondage, yet they were not many, nor very heavy, and for the future they should lay no other, nor more upon them; and what they did, was to prevent any other or greater burden to be laid; and so the Syriac version renders it, “lest any more, or greater burden should be laid upon you.”

Ver. 29. *That ye abstain from meats offered to idols*, etc.] Which explains what is meant by pollutions of idols, (^{<445D>}Acts 15:20)

and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication (See Gill on ^{<445D>}Acts 15:20”)

In Beza’s most ancient copy, and in three other manuscripts, and in the Complutensian edition, it follows, “and whatsoever ye would not have done to yourselves, that do ye not to another”; in like manner the Ethiopic version also reads, as in (^{<445D>}Acts 15:20) “from which if ye keep yourselves ye shall do well”; it will be doing a good thing, and make for the peace of

the churches; in Beza's most ancient copy it is added, "born", or "moved by the Holy Ghost": being influenced and assisted by him in this, and every good work:

fare ye well; the Syriac version adds, "in our Lord".

Ver. 30. *So when they were dismissed*, etc.] That is, Paul and Barnabas, with Judas and Silas, by the apostles, elders, and church at Jerusalem:

they came to Antioch; or "came down to Antioch", as the Alexandrian copy, the Vulgate Latin, and Ethiopic versions read, agreeably to (~~4150~~ Acts 15:1)

and when they had gathered the multitude together; the whole church, which consisted of many members; the company, or congregation of the faithful, as the Arabic version renders it: and as Paul and Barnabas were sent by the church at Antioch; and as the letter, which they, with Judas and Silas, brought from Jerusalem, was directed and sent to the brethren at Antioch, it was highly reasonable, and necessary, that they should be called together, and an account of the business they were sent upon be given them, and the letter be delivered to them, as it accordingly was:

they delivered the epistle; sent by the apostles, elders, and brethren at Jerusalem to them; this they put into the hands of some one or other of the brethren of the church, in order to be read.

Ver. 31. *Which when they had read*, etc.] That is, when the brethren of the church at Antioch had read the letter delivered to them; for not Paul and Barnabas, or Judas and Silas, who were sent with it, read it, but the brethren to whom it was sent, as was proper.

They rejoiced for the consolation, or "exhortation", as the word may be rendered, which was given them in the letter, to abstain from the above things, without being burdened with any other; and they rejoiced that there was such an agreement among the apostles, elders, and brethren at Jerusalem; and that their sentiments, and those of Paul and Barnabas, and other faithful ministers and saints at Antioch, were alike, and were opposed to the judaizing preachers and professors; and above all, they rejoiced that they were freed from the burdensome yoke of the law, and that the controversy which had been raised among them, was likely to be ended, and to issue so well.

Ver. 32. *And Judas and Silas being also prophets themselves*, etc.] As well as Paul and Barnabas, and others, that were at Antioch; (see ~~4431~~ Acts 13:1) and by prophets are meant, not only such who had the gift of foretelling things to come; though such there were, and these might have that gift; but such who were able to explain the prophecies of the Old Testament, give the true sense of the Scriptures, and open them to the edification of others; wherefore having such gifts, they made use of them; Beza's ancient copy adds, "full of the Holy Ghost":

and exhorted the brethren with many words; which does not so much design the prolixity of their discourses, and the frequency of their ministrations, though they might preach both long and often; as the richness of the matter of them, as the Syriac version suggests, rendering it, "with a rich word"; with copiousness, fulness, and abundance of Gospel truths, with which they comforted the brethren, giving them many useful instructions and exhortations:

and confirmed them; in the doctrines of the Gospel, and particularly in their Christian liberty, and freedom from the law of Moses, in which the false teachers had endeavoured to stagger them.

Ver. 33. *And after they had tarried there a space*, etc.] How long is not certain; the Arabic version renders it "a year"; and it is probable enough, they might stay there so long, till things were thoroughly settled, which were thrown into great disorder and confusion, by the pleaders for circumcision:

they were let go in peace; that is, they were dismissed, and went away with the leave and consent of the church; who returned them thanks for the service and good offices they had done them, and wished them all peace, prosperity, and happiness, both in soul and body, and great success in their ministrations wherever they went: and as they were dismissed in peace, they left the church in perfect peace; an end being put to the controversy about circumcision, which was raised among them; and the members of the church being agreed in their sentiments, and heartily united in their affections to one another: and thus Judas and Silas were honourably dismissed

from the brethren, at Antioch,

to the Apostles, at Jerusalem; the Alexandrian copy, and Beza's ancient copy, the Vulgate Latin, and Ethiopic versions, read, "to them that sent

them”; and so include, with the apostles, the elders, and brethren at Jerusalem, who wrote the letter to the church at Antioch, and sent it by them; and it was proper that they should return to them, and give them an account of the success of it, how it was received, and what good it had done.

Ver. 34. *Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still*, etc.] Though he had leave to go, and was actually dismissed with Judas; and doubtless intended to have gone with him, but for some reason or another he changed his mind, and thought fit to continue at Antioch some time longer: and the design of Providence in it seems to have been this; that he might be a companion with the Apostle Paul in his travels among the Gentiles, as he afterwards was, and was very useful to him. This verse is wanting in the Alexandrian copy, and in the Syriac and Arabic versions; the Ethiopic version reads, “and Paul proposed”, or “determined to abide”, as he did some little time longer, as appears from the following verse: the Vulgate Latin version here adds, and “Judas went alone to Jerusalem”; and so it is read in one of Beza’s copies, and in one of Stephens’s.

Ver. 35. *Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch*, etc.] As well as Silas: teaching and preaching the word of the Lord; the Gospel of Christ; not the word of men, but the word of the Lord, of which he is both the author and subject: this they preached in season, and out of season, with power, purity, plainness, and faithfulness.

And many others also; who either came along with them from Jerusalem, when they brought the letter from thence, or were here before; who came hither upon the persecution raised at the death of Stephen, (⁴¹¹⁹Acts 11:19,20) or they were the prophets which afterwards came from Jerusalem thither, (⁴¹¹⁷Acts 11:27) such as Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, (⁴¹¹³Acts 13:1).

Ver. 36. *And some days after*, etc.] That Judas was gone to Jerusalem, and which they had spent in teaching and preaching the word of the Lord at Antioch:

Paul said to 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; by the “brethren in every city”, the apostle means the believers in Syria, Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia; where he and Barnabas had preached the Gospel with success; where churches were planted and elders were

ordained; of which an account is given in the two preceding chapters: and it may be observed, what an affection the apostle had for the young converts, and members of these churches; he calls them “brethren”, they being partakers of the same grace, and of the same faith and family with himself, though they were not in the same office, nor had the same gifts; as also what care he took of them, and of those new planted churches: and which shows, that such are to be visited and looked after, and their cases inspected into; and inquiries should be made of them, how they do, how they go on; whether they continue in the faith, and grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ; and whether they are lively in the exercise of the graces of faith, hope, love, humility, etc. and diligent and fervent in the discharge of duty; and this is a work becoming the ministers of the Gospel; and the example of the apostle is worthy of imitation.

Ver. 37. *And Barnabas determined*, etc.] Or consulted, and contrived in his own mind, and purposed within himself; the Alexandrian copy, and two of Beza’s, the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions read, “he would”, or was willing; he had a mind, a very great desire,

to take with them John, whose surname was Mark; of whom (see ^{<442D>}Acts 12:12) he being his sister’s son, (^{<5040>}Colossians 4:10) him they brought with them to Antioch, when they returned from Jerusalem thither, where they had been sent by the church at Antioch, with money for the relief of the poor saints; (see ^{<441D>}Acts 11:29,30, 12:25) and who seems to have come with them from Jerusalem again; for thither he went, when he parted from them at Pamphylia, (^{<443B>}Acts 13:13).

Ver. 38. *But Paul thought not good to take him with them*, etc.] He did not think him worthy, or a fit and proper person to go with them, as the word used seems to signify, and therefore he refused to take him: the Syriac version renders it, “but Paul would not take him with them”; and, the Ethiopic version is very expressive, though it renders it in softer language, “Paul prayed, or entreated Barnabas that he would leave Mark”; that is, behind them at Antioch: his reasons were as follow:

who departed from them from Pamphylia, (See Gill on “^{<443B>}Acts 13:13”); either through the fatigue of the journey, or fear of danger, or weariness in his work, or affection to his mother; or be it what it will, it seems in the apostle’s opinion of the matter, he was very blameworthy, and on account of it very undeserving, at least at present, of being a companion of theirs in their travels:

and went not with them to the work; the Arabic version adds, “of preaching”; that is, the Gospel, in the several places whither they went, and to which the Holy Ghost had called them, and for which the church at Antioch had separated, and sent them forth; but in the midst of this John deserted them; and which the apostle resented, he having, as yet, not given any evidence of his sense of his evil, and of his repentance for it, to his satisfaction; though it seems as if he afterwards did, since in (⁵¹⁰¹⁰Colossians 4:10,11) he speaks of him with great respect, as one of his fellow workers, and who had been a comfort to him.

Ver. 39. *And the contention was so sharp between them*, etc.] About this matter; Barnabas insisting on it, that John Mark should go with them, he being a relation of his; and in whose favour it might be urged, that his mother Mary was an excellent good woman, who had received the saints into her house, in a time of persecution; and that it should be considered, that this her son was but a young man, and could not be thought to have that courage, resolution, constancy, and solidity, as older professors and ministers; and that his crime was not very heinous, and should be overlooked. Paul, on the other hand, opposing his going with them, as a very unworthy person, because he had behaved so cowardly, and had shown such a coldness and indifference to the work of the ministry, and had so shamefully left them; and thus they disputed the point till there was a paroxysm between them, as is the word used: they were irritated and provoked by one another, and were so warmed and heated on both sides,

that they departed asunder one from another; thus as soon almost as peace was made in the church, a difference arises among the ministers of the word, who are men of like passions with others; and though it is not easy to say which was to blame most in this contention; perhaps there were faults on both sides, for the best men are not without their failings; yet this affair was overruled by the providence of God, for the spread of his Gospel, and the enlargement of his interest; for when these two great and good men parted from one another, they went to different places, preaching the word of God:

and so Barnabas took Mark and sailed unto Cyprus; (See Gill on “⁴¹¹⁰Acts 13:4”).

Ver. 40. *And Paul chose Silas*, etc.] To be his companion and assistant; this being the design of the Holy Ghost in influencing his, mind to stay

longer at Antioch, after he, with Judas, was dismissed by the church to go to Jerusalem, (~~4153~~ Acts 15:33,34)

and departed; that is, from Antioch:

being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God; (see Gill on ~~4135~~ Acts 13:26"). The apostle having such a recommendation by the brethren of the church at Antioch, when he departed from them, and nothing of this kind being said with respect to Barnabas, have induced some to think, that the church took the part of the apostle against Barnabas, in the dispute between them; since the one went away saluted by them, and the other not.

Ver. 41. *And he went through Syria and Cilicia*, etc.] Antioch was the metropolis of the former, and Tarsus, the apostle's native place, was in the latter; and in both these countries he had been before, and had been the instrument of converting many souls, and of planting churches, which he now visited, as he proposed to Barnabas to do: for it follows,

confirming the churches; in the Gospel, and the truths and ordinances of it, he had before instructed them in: of the church at Antioch, (See Gill on ~~41125~~ Acts 11:26"). And that there were also churches in Cilicia, is very manifest; and particularly there was one at Tarsus, the chief city in it. Herodian, of whom we read in (~~5161~~ Romans 16:11) and Jason, in (~~4175~~ Acts 17:5) who are reckoned among the seventy disciples, are said to be bishops or pastors of this church; (see Gill on ~~4200~~ Luke 10:1"). In the "second" century there was a church in that city, to which Ignatius wrote an epistle, still extant ^{f759}, in which he makes mention of Philo their deacon: in the "third" century Helenus presided over this church, and was present at a synod at Antioch, when Paulus Samosatenus was condemned for heresy ^{f760}: in the "fourth" century mention is made of several churches in Cilicia, and the bishops of them; there was a church at Apsis in Cilicia, Amphion was bishop of Epiphania, Theodorus of Mopsuestia, Cyriacus of Adanan, and Sylvanus of Tarsus, the metropolis; in which last place, in the beginning of this century, several martyrs suffered under Dioclesian, particularly Tharatus, Probus, and Andronicus: here the orthodox, in the times of Valens, would have convened a synod against the Arians, but were hindered by him; and in this century Diodorus, bishop of Tarsus, had the care of all the churches in Cilicia committed to him; in this age also we read of Antoninus, a presbyter of this church, afterwards made bishop of it: in the "fifth" century mention is made of the bishops of several churches in

Cilicia, as of Mopsuesta, Irenopolis, Epiphania, Tarsus, Anazarbus, Sebaste, and others who were present at several councils held at different places in this century; in the “sixth” century, out of the cities of Cilicia, Jotapa, Pisidia, Pompeiopolis, Tarsus, Coricus, Anemurius, bishops are said to come to the synod at Rome and Constantinople: in the seventh century, Tarsus was the metropolitan church of Cilicia; and mention is made of the bishops of that and of other cities in this country, who assisted at the sixth council at Constantinople: in the “eighth” century, notice is taken of a Church at Sida in Cilicia^{f761}; so long the Christian name was in those parts. Beza’s ancient copy adds, “delivering the commandments of the elders”; and the Vulgate Latin version, “bidding” them to keep the commandments of the apostles and elders; (see ~~4464~~ Acts 16:4), namely; the decrees of the assembly at Jerusalem; which seems very agreeable, since the letters were directed and sent to the brethren of the Gentiles in Syria and Cilicia, as well as in Antioch; (see ~~4452~~ Acts 15:23).