

Acts 15:23-41 - New Beginnings

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we just, we love you, Lord. We offer up this time to you. We give you our hearts, Lord, and our minds. We pray you'd speak to us through your word, and we pray you'd give us understanding, Lord. The words that you speak are life and truth, and in Jesus' name, amen.

So the poor church in Antioch, they have been waiting two weeks to find out what this letter is that's been written to them from Jerusalem, because that's how long ago it was since we were in the text, and we stopped at the beginning of verse 23 there, it says, and they wrote letters by them after this manner, and then we stopped.

And if you think of it, like think of that church, if you were that church in Antioch, God has done an amazing movement of his spirit. The Gentiles have come to faith. The Holy Spirit's been poured out. The church is thriving.

And then someone comes and says, no, no, no, no, no, no. You cannot worship God in this manner. And the confusion and the turmoil and the angst and anxiety that would create.

And then thinking of the church, well, what do you have in that church? Some people are like, I totally agree with that. I knew we were supposed to keep the law. And they're doubling down on that. And you have some that are like, no, I'm not keeping the law.

[1 : 1 2] That just doesn't make any sense. And so there's this, like, division happening. And you can just imagine the turmoil that resulted from these men who came in trying to say, you need to keep the law.

So where it's been two weeks for us, since we've been in this text, I don't know how long it took when they sent Barnabas and Paul. They sent them back with the Judaizers and said, go sort this out for us in Jerusalem.

And then they're sitting there waiting. You know, you think, it's a week gone by. Okay, it's the next Sunday. And whoever is preaching that Sunday gets up. And, oh, we haven't heard anything yet from Jerusalem.

You know, I see law keepers are over there and your grace people are over there. It must have been very interesting. So where are we at this point in history?

So if you remember, Paul has, he's finished his first missionary journey. And this is actually a map of his second missionary journey. But inside the square is kind of what we're concerned with.

[2 : 1 5] They've come back from Antioch. They're in Jerusalem. That's where they met with the apostles. They've now, the apostles and elders have written this letter. And they're sending Barnabas and Paul back.

And they're also sending Judas and Silas back as well to Antioch. And so that's what's happening there in the number nine arrow heading up to Antioch.

That's kind of where we find ourselves. Where is this in Paul's life? Well, in the timeline of Paul's life, look inside that red box. A.D. 50 would be about the time, you know, he begins.

He's going to start his second missionary journey when we get to the end of the chapter here. But there you see the council at Jerusalem. It also says there Galatians letter written. If you look in your Bible, Galatians at the end of it will probably say something like written from Rome.

And that's kind of been the idea that, well, Paul wrote it when he was in Rome. But it's believed Galatians was the first letter written and as early as before or right after this time period.

[3 : 14] The thought is it's before. Because Galatians deals with what? The law. You don't have to keep the law. You don't have to be circumcised. If it was after this event, why did Paul not reference something so important as this council that happened in Jerusalem?

Guys, remember the letter? Remember what the council in Jerusalem decided? Remember that we all came around this idea we don't need to keep the law? So it kind of gives the idea that Galatians may have been written prior to this.

But either way, Paul wrote Galatians whenever he wrote it. So that's kind of where we find ourselves in his life. He's going to be starting his second missionary journey. And then we find ourselves here overall, the book of Acts.

This is kind of a flow to the book of Acts. And again, you can see that we are in Acts 15, kind of the end of the first missionary journey. There's that gap about to start the second.

And you can see that the gospel has moved from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria. And we're now in the uttermost parts of the world.

[4 : 16] And we are in the period of the Gentiles. We've shifted from Peter, Philip, Barnabas, Paul to just predominantly Paul. That's going to happen in this chapter. And the gospel and the church are growing.

And then tonight, I guess our theme would be new beginnings. New beginnings for this church in Antioch. A fresh refreshing, a fresh start when they get this letter.

Then also for Paul and Barnabas. We're going to see new beginnings. And sometimes those new beginnings don't come or happen quite how we expect or want when we get a reset.

But God knows what he's doing. So we had talked about legalism, if you remember. The whole idea that we should be under this law. We should keep the law. Legalism leads to confusion.

Obviously, this church in Antioch must have been very confused, waiting for this time to receive this letter or this news back. And legalism builds a wall between us and God.

[5 : 14] Because now, I do not just come on the basis of grace. I come and have this barrier of legalism. I either met the requirements or I haven't.

The problem with legalism is you can't meet the requirements. You can't come to God by the law. So no matter how good you do, it's not going to get you to God. It's just going to either inflate your pride or get you really depressed.

One or the other. Because you didn't keep it or you did keep it. But it's not going to bring you to God. And so there's this confusion. Confusion leads to division. But then we're going to see these guys are going to bring this letter.

And this letter will restore clarity. Unity restores clarity. Confusion leads to division. Unity restores clarity. So that's just a little background.

Then we jump in here. Verse 23. And they wrote letters by them after this manner. So that would be by, they sent them by Paul and Barnabas, Judas and Silas.

[6 : 13] And this is the letter they wrote. The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren, which are of the Gentiles, in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia.

For as much as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying you must be circumcised and keep the law, to whom we gave no such commandment.

It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you, with our beloved Barnabas and Paul. Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have sent, therefore, Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by 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 meats offered to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication, from which if you keep yourselves, you shall do well, fare you well.

Not a very long letter. Pretty concise. Let's go back through it and see what's going on here. I think the first thing that I find jumps off the page of this letter is this idea that we are for you.

[7 : 30] Right away, they say, the apostles and elders and brethren send greetings unto the brethren. Guys, you're part of us, okay? We're for you. There's no division here.

You know, calm down, okay? You know, whoever is just about to head out and go to another church or get out of here, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. It's okay. We're for you. And that seems to be the thing that right away they wanted them to know.

Some of our deepest fears are rooted in a lack of security regarding acceptance. Those are some deep fears that we all have.

Am I going to be accepted? Am I part of this? Am I part of this group or that group? And they're rooted in that idea of acceptance. And so right away, these apostles and the brethren in Jerusalem are like, we accept you.

You are part. You are brethren. Paul will later write that in Christ there's neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female. There's no class of Christian within Christianity.

[8 : 31] We're all part of this, right? We may be at different parts in our walks. We may be responding to God's work in our lives differently. We may be saying no to the flesh and sin and the different rate in our life.

But we all stand level at the cross, right? They didn't say, well, the apostles and elders send you greeting lay people. No, they said, brethren, you know, we're one of you.

We're the same. Romans 14, 13. Roman, yeah, Romans. I said that. They said Roman. Romans 14, 13 says, Let us not therefore judge one another anymore, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

And this letter right from the beginning is kind of like, guys, we want to remove a stumbling block that has been put in front of you. So the effect of the apostles' letter, it's going to restore clarity.

This confusion, this muddledness, this idea of, am I in Christ? Am I saved? I mean, I'm not keeping the law. What do I got to do? How far do I got to go with this?

[9 : 39] It's going to establish unity, the division that's happened because of this. Maybe we're a different class of Christian. Maybe there's the Jewish Christian, and maybe we're the, like, Gentile Christians, and we just are not going to, you know, cohabit.

It's going to bring edification. That's going to jump out a lot in this, that they will be edified by this. It will be something they are glad to receive. It's going to remind them of grace, that it's by God's grace.

It's not the law. The apostles are going to say, we're in the same boat as you guys. It's all by grace. And it will result in rest. It will calm everybody down. It will be a lot of rest. I imagine they had a really big afterglow service or thankful service or just a special service after this letter was written.

Like, oh, I can picture them going home, husbands and wives, you know, in the horse and buggy or whatever it was, walking home, just like, oh, man, that was a rough week waiting for that.

I know. I started, like, separating out all the meat and the dairy. You know, that was rough. Man, I was about to take the boys to the doctor. Whew!

[10 : 54] We're good. So that's what this letter will do for this church in Antioch. And so they say, the apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren, which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia.

For as much as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words. So they went out, but they were not sent out. They went out from the, they went out with, like, the name.

So they show up at this church. They're like, hey, like, hey, where are you from? Oh, whoa. You're from Calvary Chapel, Jerusalem? Wow. Oh, that's a pretty, like, church, you know?

Yeah, and we're pretty big there. Oh, we wanted to come and we wanted to tell you. So they came with the name of apostle, the name of fellowshiping with the apostles, associating with the apostles, with the name of Jerusalem, but they weren't sent out.

They just went out. God will make it very clear where he wants us to go. We don't need to go until he calls us to go. If he hasn't, don't ever feel like you need to.

[12 : 04] Don't ever run out and then question after the fact, was I sent? You know, I can imagine, thankfully, I don't have to know what it would be like, but I can imagine how difficult it would be to start something like this and constantly be questioning, is this what God wanted?

Is this his calling? Is this his desire? I mean, that's a heavy, that's a heavy load on the mind. I would not want that. How many pastors, how many churches, how many groups of people start something in the name of the Lord, but they're not sent?

He says, they've troubled you. The word there, troubled, means to agitate, to stir up, and to disquiet. And so this letter is saying, look, we know that what these guys have said, they've troubled you with words, and they've subverted you.

Subverting means to, I like this one, plundering, dismantling, to pack up baggage in order to carry it away to another place, to move one's furniture. You know, they've shifted things around in your life that shouldn't have been shifted.

What was so like regular and normal to you, you came in your house and everything was just like moved around or is ransacked. And it's just, what happened? My happy home is torn asunder.

[13 : 19] And so this letter is saying, we understand that, guys. They've agitated you. They stirred you up. But the apostles did not waste any time with pleasantries when they recognized that the rest of these brethren was at stake.

When a soul's rest is at stake, they didn't waste any time with pleasantries. It wasn't like, you know, how's the family? Hey, just to let you know the church is thriving here. You know, we just had a guest speaker.

It was, hey, we've got to deal with this right away. And that these men, they've come in with words, they've troubled you, they've subverted your souls, the deepest part of us. And the deepest part of us wants to know, am I right with God?

It wants to know, is God pleased with me? Am I doing enough? You know, these guys are telling me I need to keep the law. It's really troubling me. That's why Paul will write in Romans chapter eight, there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, because the enemy continually is the accuser of the brethren, constantly condemning, condemning, condemning.

And the Lord is there interceding. What's he interceding with? He's interceding with his blood and his sacrifice, which says, you can't condemn them because I've been condemned for them.

[14 : 38] Father, that would be unjust. And the father looks at that and says, yes, there is no condemnation. We are never under condemnation, no matter how far off we may travel from the path.

There's never condemnation. There's correction, but not condemnation. So the apostles didn't waste any time with pleasantries in this letter. And then they move on and they say, they've subverted your souls and they are saying you must be circumcised and keep the law to whom we gave no such commandment.

So they wanted them to know they went out from us, we didn't send them. They spoke these words, we didn't command them. This is all in their own initiative. Why is that important? Because many perceive God's stamp of approval upon whatever the church says okay to.

Whatever the church does, the church trunk or treats, right? If the church, you know, has a big concert, if the church has social media, if the church has whatever, if the church does fellowship meals, if they do, you know, dancing in the streets, barking like dogs, whatever it is, whatever the church says is okay, they think people will think, well, then God put a stamp of approval on that, right?

That's why we want to be very careful. The things that we representing the Lord put our okay to, you know, it's like, well, oh, this one movie. Oh, they watch those kind of movies?

[16 : 06] Hmm. I mean, I didn't think I was supposed to, but if they do, then I will, right? We just need to be careful. But these men, the apostles and brethren and James and the elders from Jerusalem wanted them to know that we did not put our stamp of approval on this.

The apostles' opinion, it did not carry more truth, just more weight because they were apostles. No, it was just due to the responsibility their position held. They had a very high level of responsibility, which then went with it, a high level of respect, right?

We should respect those that have high levels of responsibility in Christ. And so the apostles, it wasn't like, wow, it's Peter and John and they, Jesus washed their feet. No, it was more we recognize who these men are and who God's called them to be and the responsibility that they have.

So I want to look for a moment at this idea, though, of authority, because we see here the apostles and elders giving their judgment. We saw last time with James talking about what his determination was.

And now all of a sudden, when he says, here is my commandment, it all of a sudden becomes, you know, everybody's in agreement to this. So the question of authority. The question of authority is a question of source, because all authority must be derived from an original source.

[17 : 28] You have to have a source. I can't come into your home and say, I'm home. I'm in charge here. Well, who gave you, what would you say? Who gave you authority?

Well, what gives you authority here? You don't have authority. You can't just take authority. And that's what when Jesus said to the centurion, who said, when he said to Jesus, I'm a man under authority, you know, and I have people under my authority.

I say, go and one goes and come and one comes. And Jesus realized that this man had grasped, you know, the idea of who Jesus was, that Jesus was the son of God, but he didn't take that authority to himself.

So, hey, the authority came from somewhere. Matthew 28, 18 to 20 says, and Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, this is at the end of the book of Matthew, Jesus is about to ascend into heaven.

And he came unto the apostles and disciples, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go you, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I'm with you always, even unto the end of the world.

[18 : 40] So Jesus says, all power has been given unto me, all authority in heaven and earth. Therefore, I'm giving you authority and telling you to go.

They didn't take it upon themselves. It came from somewhere. Jesus was the authority. Ephesians tells us in chapter 1, verse 20, says, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.

Speaking of God setting Jesus at his right hand. Far above all principality and power and might and dominion in every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come and has put all things under his feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.

So all authority has been placed into Jesus's hands. And Jesus turns around as authority and the head of the church and says, in that name, in that authority, go. And that's why we go in the name of Christ.

It's not just saying the name, but it's in the authority, the character and nature of Christ. It's that authority. How do we obtain that authority? How do we know what that authority is?

[19 : 51] Okay, so God's given me some type of authority in this call to take the gospel to the world. The authority in the church to disciple, to serve you, to edify one another.

What does it look like? Well, it looks like the scripture. It's not rocket science. 2 Timothy 3.16. All scripture is given by inspiration of God. It's profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

All scripture is given for the cause of authority. The man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Our authority comes to the word because Jesus has written down for us his heart, his plan, his desires, and this is how we find out about his authority and our authority.

And so as these apostles and elders are writing this, this isn't the idea like there's some big shots and big wigs and they're in charge, and we never want to get that way. We never want to think that, well, because I went to a conference and I saw so-and-so who's been in this movement for a long time, and I talked to him on an issue, and he told me this.

[21 : 01] Well, you know, the funny thing is when we were at the pastor's conference, they had a time where the regional kind of pastors, the guys who run the Calvary Chapel Association, not run it, but are over the southeast region, they kind of did a panel.

They were up on the stage, and they were talking about, they're like, we don't have any authority. You don't want us to have authority in your church. You don't want us to, like, try and tell you what to do. Like, that's not what we look at our position as. They're like, we're here to edify, support, and help.

Help. If you want help, we'll give it, but we'll never offer it unless you ask for it. Like, and even then, we can't tell you what to do. We have no authority. I don't have any authority. I don't think I do.

I can't tell you what to do. You want to know how I know I can't tell you what to do? Because you can walk out, and I can't stop you. Get back here. Get back here now. No, you do that, you're going to jail. I don't have any authority.

You know, nothing. Christ is the head of his church. He's the head. And all authority is his. The only authority I have is this, the same authority you have.

[22 : 04] I just have a calling to explain the word, and then God will use that to bring edification. You should be explaining the word to yourself as you read through this, and that's the same authority.

If I ever speak in any other authority than God's word, just throw me out, you know, or leave. Or pray real hard, and then talk to me, and then leave. Right?

You want to hear from Jesus. You don't want to hear from me. You want to know that it's his word. It's his authority. So when I approach the word, I'm just speaking to you like I speak to myself. I look through the word, and I'm like, wow, that's amazing.

Look at that. That's an interesting principle. Man, I can see the heart behind these guys speaking to them. They want them to know there's unity, that they're accepted, that they're loved. There's no condemnation. That speaks to my heart.

And I'm blessed to pass that on. We should all have that happening in our lives, whether it's that we are teaching ourselves through the study of the word, or that God gives us an outlet to be able to share his word.

[23 : 03] But you have no authority, and I have no authority. And neither do these men who've written this letter. They don't have more authority than the Judaizers. Hey, hey, we trump them, so they got to do what we say. Not at all.

Their authority is based on the word. We saw that last time with James when he said, and to this agree the words of the prophets as it is written. James says, hey, here's what the word says.

So sorry, guys. I know you want to circumcise everybody, but hey, no circumcision Sunday. Sorry. So that's where authority comes from. Christ is the head of his church.

So as we move on from verse 24 into verse 25, they say, It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul.

Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The word hazard, to give up or to give over. The ultimate commendation is to have our names linked with the name of Jesus.

[24 : 05] There's nothing higher than that. Nothing higher than to someone to link your name with Jesus. Say, hey, you've hazarded your life. You've given over your life to Jesus. You follow Jesus.

You're all about Jesus. What do you guys do, make an idol out of Jesus? Yes. He's the only thing we can make an idol out of. We do. We worship him. He's our Lord. He's our God. We love Jesus.

And so they're able to say, these men, we recognize them, that they have hazarded their lives. They've given over their lives for the name of Jesus. You know, healthy discussion is okay.

Where they say, it seemed good unto us. Well, we saw how all that came about, didn't we? That was like a hefty conversation. The Judaizers talking, then Peter talking, and then they all discuss for a while.

So healthy discussion is good. But healthy discussion will always end in unity, not division. When this discussion is unhealthy, it ends in division. Well, I can't go your way. Well, I can't go your way.

[25 : 05] We're going to see at the end of this chapter a really rough moment for the church. But it seems to end in unity. Nobody ever hazarded their life.

Nobody ever hazarded their life for the law. No one's going to do that. But for Jesus, they would. And so we've sent, therefore, Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.

For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things. So the false word must be replaced with the true word.

They're saying, we're sending this to you. These men will speak the truth to you so that they can replace the false word with the true word. And we see the false word, what did it do? It created agitation. But the true word is going to settle them.

Ephesians 5, 9 through 10. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And so as these men say, it seemed good to the Holy Spirit.

[26 : 06] Well, how did they know? Well, right here it tells us that we can prove what is acceptable unto the Lord. We prove that by, does it bear the fruit of the Spirit? The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.

Well, we established before that this idea you need to keep the law. It's not in truth. It doesn't line up with the word. And so it fails one of the tests right away. And it wasn't producing goodness or righteousness.

Necessary things. Things that must be. We will lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things. There is a necessary burden we have to bear. We think, I don't want any burdens.

I want to be free from all my burdens. Well, there's a burden we're supposed to bear. Jesus in Matthew 11, 28 says, Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest under your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. There is a burden that we are to carry.

[27 : 06] If we don't, what do we not have? Well, we don't have rest for our souls. We don't get to rest from our labor. The heavy laden burden we have doesn't go away.

I have to take on a burden. I will carry a burden. We are designed to carry burdens. That's how God created us. As we saw in Genesis right from the beginning, that God said, Adam, here's your calling.

I want you to take dominion over the world. I want you to bear this burden. Was it hard for him? No, he loved it. That was great. And then he got a woman to go along with it. Bonus, right? It was all good until sin entered the world.

And then it became a heavy burden. So Jesus comes to replace the heavy burden with the light burden. So they're saying to the church in Antioch, there is a burden that you're to carry.

There are some necessary things. There's some things that must be. That you abstain from meat offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled. Oh, shucks.

[28 : 06] I was about to go home and have some strangled soup. You know, I wanted some duck's blood soup. And from fornication, well, that's a healthy thing to abstain from.

From which if you keep yourselves, you shall do well. Fare you well. Very short letter, wasn't it? You know, I think, never say more than what needs to be said.

Proverbs says, in Proverbs 10, 19 to 21, And then it says these other two verses about the tongue.

There's three back to back. The tongue of the just is as choice silver. The heart of the wicked is little worth. The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for want of wisdom.

Look at the part that has to do with the just and the righteous. The tongue of the just is as choice silver. The lips of the righteous feed many. Well, look what this letter's doing. Look what is happening here.

[29 : 07] Right? They're receiving. It's like, oh, it's like a treasure, choice silver. You know, the lips of the righteous feed many. They're getting edified by this. In the multitude of words, their wants not sin.

So I think the idea here is the tongue of the just and the lips of the righteous, they're able to say what needs to be said. It results in what it needs to. They don't need a lot of words to do that. I say that being a person who has a lot of words.

Right? But never say more than what needs to be said. There's times where you need to say a lot. And there's times where it's better to just end the conversation. And so for these men, they said, hey, this is what you need to know.

This is where our heart's at. Fare you well. That word fare you well, it means be strong. And then where it says, you shall do well, it's to practice. It says, from which if you keep yourselves and practice this, be strong.

Be strong in this. Continue to practice these things. They're for your good. So when they were dismissed, when the men were dismissed, the word there literally means to be loosed, they came to Antioch.

[30 : 13] And when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle. And so that was the letter. And I was talking about when Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas are released from Jerusalem. They head to Antioch and they deliver the epistle.

You know, who didn't they send? They didn't send back any of the guys saying, keep the law. And they said, well, you go too. No, they didn't want confusion. They just sent those who would recognize and had the maturity to understand the word and the maturity to recognize grace.

So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch and they gathered the multitude together and delivered the epistle. They gathered them together. Again, another time when the multitude gathers together. So for those who say, well, in the book of Acts, there's only home churches, very small groups.

Well, no, it happens over and over that the whole multitude has gathered together. This does seem like it's probably all the churches in the city, right?

In Antioch, I'm sure there were more pockets of churches than just one large group, but they've come together to hear this. which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation and Judas and Silas being prophets also themselves exhorted the brethren with many words and confirmed them.

[31 : 31] So the church in Antioch, how did they receive this letter? They rejoiced for the consolation. That word consolation there, it means like to comfort or to bring comfort, to draw near, to draw like someone near in comfort.

And they rejoiced for that. The church in Antioch valued the written word of truth. They valued it more than the spoken word. They appreciated the testimony from the guys in Jerusalem, but they needed something more than hearsay.

They needed something more than just Paul and Barnabas coming back with a couple friends. You know, okay, I'm sure you talked to Peter and the boys and James, but how do I know you didn't just find some people who agree with you and come back?

So they valued the written word of truth over the hearsay. We should be quick to speak the truth, but we need something to back it up, right?

We need the word. And they had great consolation. And Judas and Silas being prophets. Well, this is interesting. We got a couple of prophets here. This must be a for-profit ministry.

[32 : 38] Being prophets also. So what is a prophet? That word prophet, it means one who speaks forth divine revelation or literally a spokesman for God is what they are. It's not one who, like we picture in the Old Testament, who when Isaiah received the prophecies from God, that is a prophet.

But what did he ultimately do? Yes, he had future revelation, but he wrote down and spoke forth God's revealed truth. This is what a prophet is.

Jesus tells us to be careful in these last days. In Matthew 24, he says, for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets. And they shall show great signs and wonders in so much that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Behold, I've told you before. Wherefore, they shall say unto you, behold, he's in the desert. Go not forth. Behold, he's in the secret chambers. Believe it not.

So we're to watch out for false prophets. But there are true prophets. And here's how we can know kind of what a prophet looks like. Because it tells us. There were prophets also themselves.

[33 : 43] And what did they do? They exhorted the brethren with many words and confirmed them. Exhorted, it's that same word. Consolation means the same type of thing. To call to one side, to comfort.

And so what did these prophets do? What did their words do? They didn't stir them all up and get them all hyped and excited. It was to comfort. It was to call them to one side as the idea of like discipleship.

Like, hey, let's walk this out together. Romans 15, 4. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning. That we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.

A prophet will comfort with the scriptures. They will not have new revelation. Confirmed, where it says they confirmed them. That means to establish or render more firm.

Colossians 2, verse 6 and 7. As you've therefore received Christ the Lord, so walk you in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith as you've been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

[34 : 41] There is a pattern that goes back to the word. This is how you've been taught. Continue in it. They confirm them. The prophet confirms them, establishes them more firm in the word.

A modern-day prophet is not one who has secret knowledge or secret messages from Jesus. A modern-day prophet should look just like an old-fashioned prophet, one who speaks forth the truth of God's word under the anointing and calling of the Holy Spirit.

Prophecy should result in the hearer being further comforted and established in the truth. Does that mean the Holy Spirit is not giving people a gift of prophecy, like a word of future events?

No, of course he's doing that, but it's never gonna contradict the word. All right, let's move through the end of this now. And after they tarred there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.

Notwithstanding, it pleased Silas to abide there and to abide there still. So literally the word pleased means think, and then where you have abide and still, couched around the word there, they assume two of the same words, they mean remain.

[35 : 50] So essentially, remain is pointing back to there, very heavily emphatic that he remained there. He wanted to stay there. This was in his mind. And there's great freedom of choice in the spirit. When we walk in the spirit, it's never a binding thing.

It's never you must go, you must do. There's great freedom in the spirit when we have our hearts and our motives aligned with the spirit. He stayed there with the brethren.

Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord with many others also. Now to go very deep into this, but that word teaching, it's didactic is the idea.

Didache. Didactic is a systematic approach to teaching. It's essentially what we're doing right here. It's lecture-based with the teacher having clearly defined goals for the students, right?

We're not all coming together. What do you think? What do you think? What do you think? We're teaching where we are recognizing there's a systematic approach to this word, right? Expository preaching, explanation, explaining.

[36 : 54] The meaning of the scripture is the scripture. Without the meaning, it's nothing. So you can read this, and if it means nothing to you, it's not the scripture. It's the meaning behind it that's the scripture.

So when we teach, when we give expository explanation, we want to give the meaning of the scripture because that's what the scripture is. That's, again, our authority.

So Paul and Barnabas, they stick around and they teach and preach, which is to bring forth good news, specifically about Christ. And they taught the word of the Lord with many others also.

So there's a bunch of other people here teaching. Does that mean like they're all like taking turns on different Sundays? No, I think it's just talking about the fact that there's probably multiple churches in Antioch that came together to hear this.

There was a conference. This is important. And they all went kind of back home. And Paul and Barnabas probably made their rounds throughout Antioch, teaching and edifying and encouraging them in the things that they had learned.

[37 : 51] And now we have a great historical event about to happen. It's the second missionary journey of Paul. And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we preach the word of the Lord and see how they do.

This is a good idea. Let's go back through. Let's see what they do. Visit means to examine, but with the intent to care. Let's closely look at what's going on to care for them.

How do they do? That word how they do means what manner they hold to. Let's go back and see what manner are they holding to. Let's go care for them. And Barnabas, that's a great idea, Paul.

Barnabas determined. That word determined is like an executive decision. Like, oh, by the way, we're doing this. John Mark's coming. And Paul's like, John Mark's not coming. And Barnabas is like, John Mark's coming.

And Paul's like, John Mark's not coming, Barnabas. In Acts 13, now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia.

[38 : 59] Remember, it's like the coast of the Mediterranean there in Galatia. And John departing, literally means to separating. John separated from them, turned back to Jerusalem.

Paul's like, Barnabas, he turned back. He did not remain with us. I want you to see some of these words. I think it really gives the heart of what's going on at this moment.

We're going to find out in verse, well, 38 says, and Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them, from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder one from the other. So Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus, and Paul chose Silas and departed, being recommended by the brethren under the grace of God.

And it tells us where he went. We do not follow Barnabas. He went through Syria, Paul did with Silas, and Cilicia, confirming the churches. So this argument, this moment, this contention that's happening, some of these words are, I think, instructive to kind of give us the heart what's going on.

[40 : 05] So John, Mark. John's name is Jehovah is a gracious giver, and Mark is a defense. So Paul is like, I mean, Barnabas is like the son of consolation.

He says, I want to take John Mark. Jehovah's a gracious giver. He could be a defense for us. This guy's got potential and character. Paul, do you remember when I got you from the backside of the desert, Paul?

I don't want to talk about that. We're not bringing John Mark, right? He wanted to bring him, but Paul thought not good to take him with them who departed from them, from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

Thought, the word there. Paul thought not good literally means to judge worthy. He did not think that it was worthy, thought not good.

He thought it not a worthy thing. He judged this not a worthy endeavor. Where he says to take them with him. The word take is to companion. I do not want him to companion with us.

[41 : 08] I don't see the value in John Mark companionship with us because he, why? He departed from us. He stood off. He stood aloof.

He just distanced himself from us. Do you remember that Barnabas when we landed and we were getting ready to go on up into the hills of Antioch of Pisidia? It was so awkward. He just kind of like started to distance himself and he got weird and he stood aloof and then he went home and left us and went not.

That word means to assemble. He did not assemble with us. He had the opportunity to and he went not to the work, to the labor. He didn't want to carry his share. I just, I just don't want to do this, Barnabas.

That's Paul, where Paul was at. Was Paul wrong? No, I don't think so. I think he was absolutely spot on with everything he said about John Mark. This is what we experience, Barnabas. This just isn't for me.

Barnabas is like, but this, I like, I go for the lame ducks, you know, I go for the winged pigeon. They're just like, oh, I just have a heart for the guy who's, I want to raise him up and disciple him.

[42 : 15] And Paul's like, I got to move. I've got churches that need strengthening. I got, I need to get moving. And what's, who's, who's God going to eventually give to Paul?

We're going to see that in the next chapter. Timothy. He's got a Timothy out there. Paul could not take Mark, John Mark. He couldn't. He needed a Timothy. And eventually he's going to say, I have no man like-minded with me except Timothy.

He needed a Timothy. John Mark needed a Barnabas. He didn't need a Paul. Thank the Lord for Barnabases. We've all had him in our lives. Those who've come alongside when Paul has said, I don't got time for this.

And someone else comes and says, hey, I got time. Now that doesn't make the other guy wrong. Okay. And this, I don't think the scripture is saying Paul or Barnabas are wrong. It's just pointing this out as something that happened.

And it says the contention. That word contention literally means provoke or irritation. It was such a great irritation. It was so sharp. That word sharp, it's the same word used in Revelation chapter six, verse 14.

[43 : 19] It says, the heaven departed as a scroll when it's rolled together. Snapped close. You know, it's like the shade. You let it go and it rolls together. And he's saying, this is, that's the same word that's sharp.

The contention was so sharp, just so shocking and in your face. But this word contention, we see it again in Hebrews. It's the word there in Hebrews 10, verse 24 and 25.

And let us consider one another to provoke, that's the same word, unto love and to good works. How do we provoke one another to love and good works? We exhort one another through fellowship. You can't provoke to love and good works if you're not in fellowship and all the more as we see the day approaching.

And so that's what's happening here. There's this contention that happens. They parted asunder one from the other. Literally though, one from the other in the language is mutual.

Like there's a mutual like, this isn't gonna work, Barney. Yeah, I know, Paul. I'll see you. You know? Paul takes Silas. You know what his name means?

[44 : 21] Woody. Dude, I'm gonna take that stout dude. I mean, that guy's solid. He's like, you're coming with me. And they head off. Paul says this in Philipians 3.13.

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this is the one thing I do. Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth under those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

I don't think you let it bother him. You know what? Barnabas, you go do what you're gonna do. I'm not gonna be bitter. I'm not gonna be angry. This happened. Some relationships have expiration dates.

The servant is no greater than his master, right? The disciple, or no greater than his lord, the disciple is no greater than his master. There's enough that he be as him. Paul outgrew Barnabas. There was a season for Barnabas.

He needed Barnabas, but it had come time where Paul had outgrown Barnabas and they had to separate. Don't judge what God is doing by the means he uses to separate.

[45 : 22] I've had some interesting separations in my life and some that I could think, God, are you three with me? God, did I do something wrong? That person did something wrong, right? Don't judge what God's doing by the means he uses to separate.

And then they end up going to Syria and Cilicia. The capital of Cilicia, Paul's hometown, Tarsus. Where does Barnabas go? Back to Cyprus with John Mark. I like that with Barnabas.

He's like, come on, John Mark, we're going to retrace those same steps. We're going to do the course all over again. We're going to start in Cyprus, my hometown, and work our way through to the point where eventually Paul's going to say, and bring John Mark.

He's valuable to me. He's valuable to the work of the gospel. Good job, Barney. You did it. You saved another one. Brought another one up in the faith. Separation, while not always pleasant, is not always sinful.

Unity can be maintained through mutual separation. The key is to see God's hand is able to still work through differences when we are not able to work out those differences. Some differences you will not work out, but God can still work through those differences, and that's okay.

[46 : 30] In Romans chapter 12, verse 18, Paul says, if it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men. As much as is possible, and as much as lies in you, as in you, is in you, okay?

Your part. Live peaceably with all men. And then, I think this, Kenny says, this is what it kind of looks like. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. For it's written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.

That frees us to then do our part. I don't have to try and take care of this other person's part. That's God's part. Therefore, if thy enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirst, give him drink.

For in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Because God knows what he's doing and he can take care of the other party, it frees me to do my part.

To show good. And to overcome evil with good. So as much as it's possible with us, live peaceably with all men. Some men it's not possible to live peaceably with.

[47 : 32] That's okay. And then you'll separate. And God will use them and he will use you and we'll all arrive and we'll be like, look at the fruit that we have to his account. Right? To live peaceably.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you. You look at each one of us and you see great potential and great value. But just like we talked about, it's not because of us. We have nothing to say.

To ourselves, we are just one more voice among thousands. Lord, we want to come with the words of Jesus. We want to come with authority because of the word of God. That I can speak to a friend who's struggling.

I can speak to someone who doesn't know the Lord. I can speak with authority to someone and say, you must be born again. You're in sin. You need to be saved. And the truth of that by the Holy Spirit will penetrate their heart.

They will either reject it or accept it. I don't have to convince them of who I am, of why they should listen to me because I have the authority of the word of God. And Jesus, you are the head of your church.

[48 : 34] Thank you for the people you've placed in your church. I thank you for the people you've placed in my life through the years, Lord. Those that have been like Paul and Barnabas, like the letter that came from Jerusalem that have settled me on issues, that have calmed me down, that have brought me back to grace.

Thank you, Lord. And Lord, as much as is possible, we want to live at peace with one another and with all men. But we recognize, Lord, that's only going to come through the Prince of Peace.

And Lord, those that it's not possible to live at peace with, those that it just seems like the oil is not going to mix with the water, then Lord, may we in faith say, God bless you. And may we just, like Paul, forgetting that which is behind, reaching forth onto that which is before.

We press forward to the prize or the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Thank you for this time. And in Jesus' name, Amen.