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XV. The Apostolic Council at Jerusalem - *But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." {2} And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. {3} So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, reporting the conversion of the Gentiles, and they gave great joy to all the brethren. {4} When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. {5} But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up, and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses." {6} The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. {7} And after there had been much debate, Peter rose and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. {8} And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; {9} and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith. {10} Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? {11} But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will." {12} And all the assembly kept silence; and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. {13} After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brethren, listen to me. {14} Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. {15} And with this the words of the prophets agree, as it is written, {16} 'After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up, {17} that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, {18} says the Lord, who has made these things known from of old.' {19} Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, {20} but should write to them to abstain from the pollutions of idols and from unchastity and from what is strangled and from blood. {21} For from early generations Moses has had in every city those who preach him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues." {22} Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, {23} with the following letter: "The brethren, both the apostles and the elders, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting. {24} Since we have heard that some persons from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, {25} it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, {26} men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. {27} We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. {28} For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: {29} that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell." {30} So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. {31} And when they read it, they rejoiced at the exhortation. {32} And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, exhorted the brethren with many words and strengthened them. {33} And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brethren to those who had sent them. {35} But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.*

- A. Outline
1. Cause - vv. 1-5
 2. Council - vv. 6ff
 - a. Debate - v. 7a
 - b. Decision and Discourse - vv. 7b-11
 - c. Demonstration - v. 12
 - d. Deference - vv. 12-18
 - e. Distinction - vv. 19-21
 - f. Dispatch - vv. 22-30
 - g. Delight - v. 31
 3. Continuation - vv. 32-35
- B. Background - The entrance of Gentiles into the Church set up a problem that had to be solved. Remember the background of the Jewish people that was very solidly rooted in the fact that they were the Chosen People with a particular glory. One of the greatest gifts they had received was the Law by which God had blessed them with the truth. Now, even if a Gentile was to be admitted to the Church (which in itself was difficult for many Jews to accept), did it not make sense that he should be submitted to and accept this great gift of God? Should not the Gentile be circumcised and accept the full yoke of the Law? In other words, should not the Gentile "become a Jew" first? Now this position would have been hard for many Gentiles to accept. After all, they had heard the words of Jesus and this is what brought them to conversion. The Jewish Law was largely foreign to them and of another culture. Thus the second position in this disagreement was that the Gentiles did not have to become Jews first. But, if this be the case, what laws and customs ought they follow? What distinctions could and should be made between the Moral Law and custom? In other words, what Laws should the Gentiles follow and what could they ignore? Further, there was a strict Law upon the Jew that he could have no interaction with Gentiles. He could not have a Gentile as a guest nor be the guest of one. Insofar as possible he was not even to do any business with Gentiles. Thus, now that Gentiles were admitted to the Church, how much could Jews and Gentiles mix? Were there any limits? Should all barriers be dropped? Even if this could be done by way of Church Law it would still be difficult to achieve socially since Jews and Gentiles were of such different cultural backgrounds. The Apostles did not agree even among themselves on the solutions to these bewildering questions. What was to be done? A general council of Church was called to discuss and settle these matters and we see it set before us here in Chapter 15.
- C. For the Roman Catholic Church there is here another affirmation of our present structure and Ecclesiology. We see the first Bishops (the Apostles) met together with the first Pope (Peter) to settle a matter of disagreement within the Church and among themselves. After discussion and debate, the matter is resolved by Peter (the Pope) and his decision is binding. James who stood apart from Paul and Peter on the matter had to stand down and accept the decision. Further the decision of Peter is binding on the whole Church as we see a letter sent forth

announcing the decision and binding all to follow it. This model of a General Council has been followed down through the history of the Church. Whenever there have been significant questions or problems that cannot be resolved among the local bishops, there is a General Council of the Church called to resolve the matter. The council is presided over by the Pope and the result of the council is to write a letter of decision binding the whole Church. Some of the most significant Councils of the Church have been: Ephesus, Chalcedon, Nicea, Orange, Trent, Vatican Council I, and Vatican Council II. With the exception of VC II all these Councils issued general decrees conveying the decisions and declaring them binding. The Popes preside over these councils, give them their authority and resolve any major differences that cannot be resolved by conversation. All this we see here in Acts in seminal form confirming the Catholic Church's structure of authority: The Pope in communion with the Bishops but in authority over them. The Whole council in authority over the Church and able to render binding decisions which, if rejected by any Church member *ipso facto* excludes them from communion with the Church.

- D. ***came down from Judea*** that is to Antioch where Paul and Barnabas have been staying "no little time" with the disciples there. Judea may be another way of referring to the Jerusalem community for the issue centers on the legitimacy of the Gentle mission. The Church in Jerusalem was comprised of Palestinian Jews who spoke Aramaic and Hebrew. These were very distinct from the Hellenistic Jews who spoke Greek. We saw earlier how there have been frictions between these groups. Recall how the widows who Greek thought they were neglected in favor of those who spoke Hebrew (Acts 6). Recall too the trouble Paul encountered in his last journey to Jerusalem at the hands of the Jews there (9 although these Jews were not likely Converts to the Christian Faith). Finally, recall Peter's trouble with the circumcision party over the question of baptizing Cornelius (11). All of this (in a parallelism we have seen countless times already in Acts) mirrors the trouble of our Lord. The closer our Lord got to Jerusalem the more hostility he encountered. Jerusalem was a place of great religious polemics. There were a great many religious tensions and camps there even as is the case today. Hence, it is no surprise that trouble is emerging from there.
- E. ***Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.*** - Circumcision was the traditional ritual of inclusion in the people from the time of Abraham. Paul deals with the questions surrounding circumcision extensively in Romans and Galatians. But the point for Jews was not merely that it is an operation performed on male babies but that it was a symbol of the acceptance and submission to the whole Law. Thus these Judeans are not just saying, "One must have a certain medical procedure to be saved." They are saying that "Unless the Jewish Law with its 613 precepts is kept, one cannot be saved." Paul, all throughout Romans and Galatians and other places rails against this by arguing thus: "If one can be saved by keeping the Law then why did Christ have to come." Hence to make the Law a savior is to replace the need for Christ.
- F. ***Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them*** - Here is a vivid image of the division this debate has caused. It is not just a small matter over which reasonable may differ. Hence we see the groundwork for necessity of

the Council laid.

- G. ***Paul and Barnabas...appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.*** - who appointed them to go is not clear. Was it agreed to by their opponents that they go? In this case it some members of the opponents may have been among the "others" who went with them. Perhaps too they were appointed by other Gentile converts who were troubled by the claims of the men from Judah. After all, Jerusalem was the mother church. Hence they simply ask Paul and Barnabas to go and find out for sure what was to be done. At any rate, the authority of Paul and Barnabas alone does not seem to be able to hold the day in the question. This is also true today of the individual Bishop who is not able to act or rule merely on his own. Rather, he must receive his authority from the Pope in Rome and act in conformity with the teachings and beliefs of the Church and the disciplines of the Roman Church. Some local differences in liturgy or discipline can be allowed but only by indult from Rome. Hence, we see this limited authority of the Bishop. He has extensive authority but cannot act alone. Especially in matters of which he is uncertain, he must consult with the Pope and the curial officials in Rome who represent the Pope.
- H. ***they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders*** - It is not clear here exactly who the elders are and precisely what group greets P & B et al. Apostles and elders is clear enough but who is "the Church." Does it mean the whole Church literally or only in an extended sense(?); Probably the second. However it is clear in the meeting that is about to take place that the leaders (Apostles and Elders) only are involved.
- I. In effect, what happens next is a reprise of the debate they just left. Paul and Barnabas related all that had just happened and the joyous fact that the Gentiles had accepted the Gospel. But some of the Pharisee party protested saying that they had to be circumcised first. Thus the stage is set for the Council Meeting to follow among the Apostles and elders. On to the meeting...
- J. The convocation and Peter's Address (15:6-12) A basic retelling of this passage is as follows. The Apostles and elders go apart to consider the matter. There was apparently much debate, the details of which Luke does not relate; but we know the basic issue. Peter finally arises and resolves the matter by siding with Paul and Barnabas. He bases his decision by discerning the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church and recalling how he had been instructed by the same Holy Spirit to show no partiality and that the former distinction between Jews and Gentiles is now null and void. He also remarks that the keeping of the Law was very difficult, a yoke that none among the Jews had been fully able to bear. He more than implies that this is why Jesus Christ came and why the Law is not what saves but solely the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This authoritative decision by Peter brings an end to the debate and causes the assembly to fall silent. Paul and Barnabas then, as if to underscore Peter's recognition of the Holy Spirit's direction of the Church add to the testimony by relating the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. James, in the next section will rise and assent to the teaching though he had been on the other side and request that a letter be issued to all the Churches.
- K. ***cleansed their hearts by faith*** - their hearts were not cleansed by a human work

called faith. We must remember that Faith is a work of God within us. It is not something we do; it is something God works in us and to which we are submitted. Hence the works that God works in us by which he saves us is first and foremost faith. Our hearts are cleansed insofar as we come to know the will of God by faith and are submitted to it by the obedience of faith. We walk uprightly to the extent that we not only hear the word of the Lord through faith but keep it. This obedience includes repentance for the times we fall short.

- L. ***why do you make trial of God*** - more literally this is rendered why are you testing God? The Greek word for test (periazō) is understood particularly in relation to resistance of God's will. Thus, Satan tested (tempted) Jesus in the wilderness. The people tested (tempted/resisted) God in the wilderness. Jesus' opponents test (resist) him (cf Lk 11:16) etc.
- M. ***we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus*** - This is a basic statement of Christian doctrine. We are not saved by works, we are not saved by prayers, we are not saved by circumcision, we are saved by the free gift of Jesus Christ, a gift which we cannot earn. However, good works do have an important role in determining the authenticity of the saving grace and faith we claim to have since they are always the result of this saving grace. The first work of this grace is faith by which we are submitted to the teachings of our Lord. Good works flow from this faith since faith is a fruit tree. Fruit trees, if they are in fact fruit trees, bear fruit. If, after years of growth a so-called fruit tree produces no fruit but rather, acorns it becomes obvious that we are not looking at a fruit tree after all! Hence, although we do not earn salvation by our good works they must infallibly follow from the grace of our Lord. If they are not present, then how can we claim to have saving grace or faith? We are like an acorn tree claiming to be an orange tree, we are a liar. Thus, good works are not the cause of salvation, they are the result of it. Without them, we can reason backwards to the lack of saving grace and faith. *"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? Every one who comes to me and hears my words and does them...(Luke 6:43-46)* Hence it is foolish to say we must embrace the law in order to be saved. Rather, many of the works of the Law, in particular the moral law, flow from the salvation worked in us. When Christ really saves us he transforms our will in such a way that we increasingly delight to follow the law of the Lord and see it as a fruit of the saving grace he has worked in us.
- N. James' Discourse (15:13-21) - The upshot of Peter's speech "after much debate" is to provoke James' agreement and acquiescence. Hence he stands now to second Peter and even to further his argument. This is remarkable due to his earlier view. But now he has been instructed by Peter and he is docile and his mind is changed. His view now comes to be that Gentiles not be troubled by the full yoke of the Jewish Law but that they should (obviously) observe the moral Law (eg no

idolatry, no unchastity). He does add the point about not eating the meat of strangled animals and we shall discuss this point below. James also requests a letter be sent to the local churches. This is probably so that no one will question the binding force and authority of the decision and that the extent of the decision of will be very clear.

- O. **James replied** - James represents not only himself, but the Church of Jerusalem. Remember Peter had moved on to Missionary works and James had assumed the episcopate of the Church in Jerusalem. This made him the leader (the bishop) of that local Church. As we have already seen it was primarily from Jerusalem that the most severe questions and criticisms of the inclusion of Gentiles have come. These Jewish Christians for obvious reasons were very culturally attached to their Jewish customs and the Jewish Law. They were also the most suspicious of the Gentiles and the influences they brought. Consider the tension in Jerusalem even today and it does not take a lot of imagination to understand the situation. Thus it is no surprise that it is James who feels to compelled to respond to the deliberations. It was probably he and members of his party who led the "much debate" that Peter rose to settle.
- P. **Simeon** - that is, Simon Peter. It is not clear why Luke has James use a more archaic form of the Name. It is no doubt however that he means Peter since the context makes this clear.
- Q. **the words of the prophets agree, as it is written** - The Prophet Amos 9:11-12 is quoted by James to represent the whole of the prophetic writings. James does freely quote it and so a few words are different. Here is the quote of Amos from the RSV: *In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name," says the LORD who does this.* Now here is James' rendering *After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up, that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who has made these things known from of old.*
- R. As has been said before, Papal authority does not exist in a vacuum nor is it exercised as such. Hence, when James arises to concur he does with three things in mind: Peter's authority, the voice of Holy Scripture, and the evident work of the Holy Spirit in the Church as discerned by Peter. So, as we have said previously, Peter and his successors do arrive at their decisions simplistically. Rather the Holy Spirit guides them (as Peter was guided back in Acts 10:9ff through his vision in prayer), They consider the testimony of Holy Scripture and interpret its relation to the present issue (as Peter did in his speeches in both 10:34ff and 11:4ff) and they discern the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church (as Peter did in 10:44ff and 15:8). Hence, neither Peter's decision, nor James' acquiescence are simplistic but they do reflect the Catholic understanding of the workings of a general council, the authority of the Pope and the relation of the bishops to him.
- S. **write to them** - Here is the first mention of the decree. The point of this decree is to set forth a uniform practice in this matter and to make the intent of Peter and the council of Apostles and elders known. Their decision will be binding on all

the Churches. This too is a very Catholic understanding of things. Today many (even Catholics) will be heard to say, "Who are a bunch of old men in the Vatican to bind me?!" Well, who were Peter and a bunch of old men (elders) to bind the early Church? So this central authority over matters of doctrine and practice is biblical. Let the detractors of Catholic Ecclesiology answer the Holy Spirit who authors the Bible. So this decree will bind the Church. There is a problem with the decree however. Acts contains three versions of it. What exactly did the decree say? Which version was sent to the Churches. As important as this decree was, why does Luke enclose three different versions of it? Scholars debate the importance of these questions and the answer to them. As we shall see the differences are very very minor. That some scholars are so concerned about the minor differences tells us more about the scholars than any problem with the text! And yet the most useful answer to those concerned about the differences is to recall that Luke's primary purpose is not to set forth all the specific doctrinal points of that decree but to give the historical account of how the Church settled the matter. The specifics of relations between Jews and Gentiles to tradition and the Law are more fully taught and set forth by Paul (esp. in Romans and Galatians). We have seen before how Luke is giving here a more general overview of the history of the Church (much to our occasional frustration). Thus here, Luke's focus seems more to be "What is the Church?" rather than "What are all the doctrinal teachings and disciplinary practices regarding Jews, Gentiles and the Law?" At any rate here are the three versions of the Apostolic Decree:

1. Acts 15:20 (RSV) but should write to them to abstain from the pollutions of idols and from unchastity and from what is strangled and from blood.
2. Acts 15:29 (RSV) that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."
3. Acts 21:25 (RSV) But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity."

T. ***abstain from the pollutions of idols*** - the prohibition of idolatry is a clear commandment for any believer of any background: Jew or Gentile. Hence idolatry is clearly prohibited by the moral Law which can never be changed. This is the very first of the Ten Commandments which bind every believer without exception. But what are the "pollutions of idols?" This phrase in the Old Testament refers to foods sacrificed to idols and is most surely what is meant here. It should be recalled what was said earlier about meals and foods earlier in these notes. In the ancient world, meals had religious connotations. To take a meal with someone was to engage in a religious act. Thus, in the Old Testament, Jews and Gentiles were prohibited to eat together since it was never a simple consumption of food but had religious significance. A Jew could never worship with a pagan. Thus the scribes and pharisees are scandalized that Jesus welcomes sinners and eats with them. In effect they say, Jesus worships God with sinners who are not ritually pure. Consider here what Paul says about all this in 1 Corinthians 8:1,4-7,13 *Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that "all*

of us possess knowledge." "Knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up. Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one." For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth -- as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords" -- yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through being hitherto accustomed to idols, eat food as really offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.

- U. **from unchastity** - to the modern ear unchastity refers to sexual immorality in general. It also had this meaning to the ears of those in the ancient world as well but it had additional connotations as well. It was very linked to idolatry since the ancient world was replete with "sacred prostitution." For ancient pagan men (especially those who had religious affiliation with the Canaanite gods), the idolatrous practices were quite appealing since they frequently communed with their gods through "sacred prostitutes." For them, going to temple had a different meaning than for a Jew! Thus, although unchastity had the ordinary notion of sexual purity as for us but in the mind of the ancient Jewish Christian in and around Palestine and the Eastern Mediterranean unchastity was also a form of idolatry and all idolatry for a form of unchastity (impurity). None of this means it is Ok for we moderns to fornicate etc. because we do not have idolatry in mind. Remember the ancient mind did not exclude our understanding by their added notions. And we should not totally think we are able to abandon all notion of sexual immorality as a form of idolatry. For many today, sex has become a kind of god or a religious practice at the altar of the flesh and the "new morality." The sexual revolution of the 1960's was about more than just sex. It was about a thorough rejection of standards and "restrictive" norms of the "old" biblical morality. The self and pleasure became the new norm. Decency, duty, and responsibility were to be abandoned. Man and his new morality moved to the center and God (with his commandments) was set aside or redefined in order to be more acceptable at the new altar of the modern age. The cry went up, "Get real, this is the twentieth century!" whenever biblical morality was invoked. Hence, we have here a false religion of sorts. The new commandments and moral norms are the pleasure principle and the sovereignty of the individual will. The sacraments of this religion (from the sexual point of view) are, free love, fornication, pornography, contraception, & abortion. With all this in mind we do well to consider the ancient appreciation of the link of sexual immorality with idolatry.
- V. **from what is strangled and from blood** - the exact meaning here is not entirely clear. But when the emphasis is put on the blood there is a possible solution. The Jews were forbidden from consuming the blood of an animal since life was in the blood and life belonged to God (Cf Lev 17:10-13). Thus the blood must be offered back to God to whom it belonged. This would give the following understanding to the first part of the sentence as thus: since strangled animals did not usually have their blood drained (but were cooked in it) to eat a strangled animal was *ipso facto* to consume blood which belonged only to God. Thus these

two phrase are collapsed into a single ritual prohibition.

- W. ***For from early generations Moses has had in every city those who preach him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues.*** James presents this as the reason that this last norm, which is not really of the Moral Law per se. Why is this particular ritual prescription advanced as necessary when others are not. In fact, this final edict about the strangled meat and the blood seems to be the perfect example of the legalisms that the Church sought not to impose. James contends it ought to be observed because the norm is so widely known even among non-Jews. Hence it was not something of a surprise to any who would convert to the Christian faith. There is a possibility that it was seen as relating to an understanding of the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." How? Since life was in the blood, to take the blood and not return it to God as a form of taking life, hence it is related to murder not because an animal can be murdered but because it violates the principle that all life belongs to God. Even when he permits us to take it as in the case of animals for food, the blood, i.e. the life must still be returned to Him because it is his. This could be what James was after in asking that this requirement be retained for both Jew and Gentile...but it is unlikely. Another more fulfilling explanation as to this final edict was that it especially regulated table fellowship and would provide a legitimate framework for Jews and Gentiles to share table without there being a total clash of cultures. In other words, even though the Gentiles would be freed from the total burden of the Law, yet, they would be asked to observe certain norms, not for salvation but out of charity.
- X. Apostolic Letter (15:22-29) Hence the letter is sent forth and here is the text of that letter. The letter seems addressed especially to those who have been troubled by the Judaizers and is sympathetic in tone. Certainly those who were on the other side of the issue would be instructed and corrected but they are not directly rebuked. Instead they received their condemnation in the third person as ***some persons from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions***.
- Y. ***Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas*** - Little is known about Judas Son of the Sabbath. Silas however is probably the same individual as Silvanus who will accompany Paul when he and Barnabas part company (15:41, 16:19). Silvanus is mentioned in numerous places in Paul's epistles (eg 2 Cor:1:19, 1 Thess 1:1). Perhaps these men were chosen since, to send Paul and Barnabas with the Letter might lead to the charge that they had fabricated the whole affair. These men go as witness and will also see the letter circulated elsewhere.
- Z. ***some persons from us*** - the council members deny any responsibility (they received no instructions from us) they do admit they came from "us" that is , the Church in Jerusalem. Paul fills in the detail in Gal 2:12 that "Certain men from James came to Antioch."
- AA. ***having come to one accord*** - the precious gift of unity. This emerges from the official Church. We shall see however that this unity is broken by some dissenters with whom Paul shall bitterly fight all his life. Over and over again in his epistles he rails against the Judaizers. Hence, despite the orthodox proclamation there will always be those who reject the teaching authority of the Church.
- AB. ***it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us*** - see how the early Church does

not hesitate to claim it can discern God's will. Some moderns may consider this an arrogant or presumptuous thing but the Church knows she is called to be the voice of God in the world and to apply God's teaching authoritatively to each moment. Here we see another strand of the teaching on infallibility. Remember, the Church came to this decision by Peter's exercise of authority. The Church cannot mislead us in matters of faith and morals. This is not to say an individual priest or bishop is incapable of error. Yet, the whole Church i.e. the body of bishops in union with the Pope, definitely teaching together on a matter of faith or morals cannot mislead us. We call this the infallibility of the ordinary magisterium of the Church. This principle is reiterated and advanced by the Second Vatican Council in *Gaudium et Spes* and the *Lumen Gentium*.

AC. ***And when they read it, they rejoiced at the exhortation*** - No doubt that many did rejoice but clear all did not. But there were some Judizers who did not rejoice and as Paul makes clear in his letters they will continue to trouble the Church and believers. Nevertheless the issue has been decided by the Church. From this point on there is an orthodox position. Those who choose another view can no longer claim to have the true faith. This too is the nature of a council which teaches the true faith and distinguishes it from false opinions held by some.