

Came down. From Jerusalem to Antioch in Syria, at that time the centre of Gentile Christianity. It was a journey of two hundred and fifty miles. **From Judea.** The Judean Christians were mainly Jews and strongly attached to their law and customs. **Taught the brethren.** The Church at Antioch was largely composed of converted Gentiles, who accepted Christ by faith without the deeds of the Jewish law. **Except ye be circumcised.** Circumcision was the outward rite by which Gentiles were made members of the Jewish Church. **After the manner of Moses.** Rev. Ver., "after the custom of Moses;" according to the way prescribed in the Jewish law. **Ye cannot be saved.** They would make salvation dependent, not upon a work of grace in the heart, but upon an external form. 1. There is always a tendency to neglect spiritual things and lay stress upon outward services in religion. 2. Those who undertake to judge others are very apt to threaten the penalties of the world to come upon all who differ from themselves.

2. **Paul and Barnabas.** Who were then at Antioch, having returned from their first missionary tour in Central Asia Minor. They had always preached salvation for Jew and Gentile upon the same terms of faith in Christ, and now found their doctrine assailed. **Dissension.** Meaning here a vigorous resistance to these Judaizing teachers. **Disputation.** Rev. Ver., "questioning;" a debate, calling in question both the doctrine and the authority of the Judaizers. **They determined.** From Gal. 2. 2, we learn that the decision was under the direction of the Holy Spirit. 3. Happy is that Church whose action is guided from on high! **Certain other.** Among these was Titus (Gal. 2. 1), whose very presence showed that God had sent spiritual gifts upon the Gentiles. **Should go up to Jerusalem.** As the mother-Church, and the residence of the apostles, it was regarded with veneration; but Paul elsewhere intimates that he did not regard its decisions as of absolute authority. Gal. 1. 1, 11-17; 2. 4-7. **Unto the apostles and elders.** The apostles were inspired men, having direction over the whole Church; the elders were local, representing the Churches in Judea. **About this question.** It was a question of vital importance, whether men could accept Christ in freedom, or must add to faith the interminable burdens of Judaism, and force the Christianity of the world to become a narrow sect, with no prospect of its progress in the world. 4. It is better to contend for the faith than to submit to false claims of authority. 5. Every age has its own questions to settle as well as the apostolic age. Now there is the same strife as then between narrow, formal sectarianism, and a broad, spiritual Christianity.

3. **Brought on their way.** The whole Church met to show its sympathy with the deputation, and bestow its blessing. **Through**

Phenice. Rev. Ver., "Phœnicia," the sea-coast province north of Palestine. **And Samaria.** They travelled by the land-route, yet near the sea; taking their course through Gentile Churches (probably founded by Philip the evangelist), as those most interested in their mission. **Caused great joy.** Everywhere they brought news of the Gospel's success among the Gentiles, and the joy with which they were received showed that the Judaic faction represented only a small fragment of the Church. 6. If angels rejoice, much more should saints on earth when souls are won to Christ.

4. **When they were come.** This was Paul's third visit to Jerusalem since his conversion, and seventeen years after it. Acts 9. 26; 11. 30; Gal. 2. 1. **They were received.** In a general gathering, the Christian synagogues meeting together to welcome them. **They declared.** In a formal address, reciting the origin and growth of the Church among the Gentiles, and showing especially that it was under a divine care. **God had done.** They gave all the glory to God, and made prominent the providential signs in the work. 7. So let every Christian worker keep Christ in the front, and himself in the shadow.

5. **Pharisees which believed.** The Pharisees were not an organized body, but a school of thought. They laid great stress on keeping the law of Moses, in its minutest requirements, and added to it thousands of minute regulations, which they regarded as of equal importance. Some of them had believed in Christ, but they were Christians only in a secondary sense, for their highest allegiance was given to Mosaism. **Needful to circumcise them.** These narrow bigots demanded that all the Gentile believers in Christ must submit to a humiliating rite which would make them Jews, and then they must obey, not only the written law, but the multitudinous prescripts of the scribes, which even a born Jew found almost impossible to follow.

6, 7. **Came together.** The whole body of the Church was also present (ver. 12), and generally concurred in the decision. **To consider.** It is a suggestive fact that they could not act by a divine inspiration without deliberation and discussion. **Much disputing.** Rev. Ver., "questioning." Not an angry dispute, but an earnest debate, in which the lines of opposing opinion were drawn distinctly. **Peter rose up.** He spoke with an authority of an apostle, but not of a pope; for the decision of the conference was rendered afterward by James. This is Peter's last appearance in the Acts, and, both in thought and language, it is eminently characteristic. **Brethren.** The chief of the apostles places his fellow-disciples on an equality with himself. **A good while ago.** From ten to fourteen years. He places the time in a strong light to show that by question has already been settled long before by divine authority. **God made**