

Acts

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Paul's Reason for keeping the Feast At Jerusalem.

Acts. 11:28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified **by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world**: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined **to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea**:

11:30 Which also they did, and **sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul**.

1Cor. 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

16:2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

16:3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send **to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem**.

16:4 **And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me**.

16:8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.

2Cor. 8:4 Praying us with much entreaty **that we would receive the gift**, and take upon us the fellowship of the **ministering to the saints**.

9:12 For the **administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints**, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

Rom. 15:25 But **now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints**.

15:26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

15:27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, **their duty is also to minister** unto them in carnal things.

15:28 When therefore **I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit**, I will come by you into Spain.

Acts. 18:21 But bade them farewell, saying, **I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem**: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

Acts. 20:16 For **Paul had determined** to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, **if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of**

Pentecost.

***Why, then did Paul say he "must keep this feast" and
"be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost."?***

Acts. 24:17 *Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.*

SKETCHES
FROM THE
LIFE OF PAUL
 BY MRS. E.G. WHITE
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 CHAPTER XII.
 APOLLOS AT CORINTH.
 Page 118.1-128

Factions also were beginning to rise through the influence of *Judaizing teachers, who urged that the converts to Christianity should observe the ceremonial law* in the matter of circumcision. They still maintained that the original Israel were the exalted and privileged children of Abraham, and were entitled to all the promises made to him. They sincerely thought that in taking this medium ground between Jew and Christian, they would succeed in removing the odium which attached to Christianity, and would gather in large numbers of the Jews. {LP 121.1}

They vindicated their position, which was in opposition to that of Paul, by showing that the course of the apostle, in receiving the Gentiles into the church without circumcision, prevented more Jews from accepting the faith than there were accessions from the Gentiles. Thus they excused their opposition to the results of the calm deliberations of God's acknowledged servants. {LP 121.2}

They refused to admit that the work of Christ embraced the whole world. They claimed that he was the Saviour of the Hebrews alone; therefore they maintained that the Gentiles should receive circumcision before being admitted to the privileges of the church of Christ. {LP 121.3}

After the decision of the council at Jerusalem concerning this question, many were still of this opinion, but did not then push their opposition any farther. The council had, on that occasion, decided that the converts from the Jewish church might observe the ordinances of the Mosaic law if they chose, while those ordinances should not be made obligatory upon converts from the Gentiles. The opposing class now took advantage of this, to urge a distinction between the observers of the ceremonial law and those who did not observe it, holding that the latter were farther from God than the former. {LP 121.4}

Paul's indignation was stirred. His voice was raised in stern rebuke: "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." The party maintaining that Christianity was valueless without circumcision arrayed themselves against the apostle, and he had to meet them in every church

which he founded or visited; in Jerusalem, Antioch, Galatia, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. God urged him out to the great work of preaching Christ, and him crucified; circumcision or uncircumcision was nothing. The ***Judaizing party looked upon Paul as an apostate, bent upon breaking down the partition*** wall which God had established between the Israelites and the world. They visited every church which he had organized, creating divisions. Holding that the end would justify the means, they circulated false charges against the apostle, and endeavored to bring him into disrepute. As Paul, in visiting the churches, followed after these zealous and unscrupulous opposers, he met many who viewed him with distrust, and some who even despised his labors. {LP 122.1}

These divisions in regard to the ceremonial law, and the relative merits of the different ministers teaching the doctrine of Christ, caused the apostle much anxiety and hard labor. In his Epistle to the Corinthians, he thus addresses them on the latter subject:-- {LP 122.2}

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" {LP 122.3}

In the Galatian churches, open, unmasked error was supplanting the faith of the gospel. Christ, the true foundation, was virtually renounced for the ***obsolete ceremonies of Judaism***. The apostle saw that if these churches were saved from the dangerous influences which threatened them, the most decisive measures must be taken, the sharpest warnings given, to bring them to a sense of their true condition. {LP 190.1}

Chapter XVIII. - Paul's Last Journey to Jerusalem

Page 194.2-207.1

Chapter XIX. - Meeting with the Elders.

Pages 207.2-214.

"And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly." Thus Luke describes the reception of the apostle to the Gentiles on his arrival at Jerusalem. Although Paul everywhere encountered prejudice, envy, and jealousy, he also found hearts that were open to receive the glad tidings which he brought, and that loved him for the sake of Christ and the truth. Yet, cheering as was the kindly greeting he received, it could not remove his anxiety as to the attitude of the church at Jerusalem toward himself and his work. Their real feelings would be more fully seen in the meeting with the elders of the church, to take place on the morrow.

Paul longed to be fully united with these. He had done all in his power to remove the prejudice and distrust so unjustly excited ***because he presented the gospel to the Gentiles without the restrictions of the ceremonial law***. Yet he feared that his efforts might be in vain,

and that even the liberal offerings of which he was the bearer might fail to soften the hearts of the Jewish brethren. He knew that the men whom he was to encounter were persons of great firmness and decision, and he looked forward with considerable apprehension to this meeting with them; yet he could not avoid the ordeal, trying though it might be. He had come to Jerusalem for no other purpose than to remove the barriers of prejudice and misunderstanding which had separated them, and which had so greatly obstructed his labors.

On the day following Paul's arrival, the elders of the church, with James at their head, assembled to receive him and his fellow-travelers as messengers from the Gentile churches. *Paul's first act was to present the contributions with which he had been intrusted.* He had been careful to guard against the least occasion for suspicion in the administration of his trust, by causing delegates to be elected by the several churches to accompany him as joint trustees of the funds collected. These brethren were now called forward, and one by one they laid *at the feet of James the offerings which the Gentile churches had freely given*, although often from their deepest poverty. Here was tangible proof of the love and sympathy felt by these new disciples for the mother-church, and their desire to be in harmony with the Jewish brethren. **Here was evidence also, that Paul had faithfully fulfilled the promise given, when at the council years before he had been urged to remember the poor.**

These *contributions* had cost the apostle much time and anxious thought, and much wearisome labor. They far exceeded the expectations of the Jewish elders, and might have been expected to call forth warm expressions of gratitude and appreciation. But Paul's half-acknowledged fears as to the manner in which the gift would be received were realized. **He could only find comfort in the consciousness that he had done his duty, and had encouraged in his converts a spirit of generosity and love.**

After the presentation of the gifts, Paul gave the brethren an account of his manner of labor, and its results. He had on former occasions stood before the same assembly, in the same city. It was before the same audience at the apostolic council (Acts 15) years before, that he related his experience in his conversion, and the great work which God had wrought through him among the Gentiles. The Spirit of the Lord then witnessed to the word spoken, and under its influence the council yielded their prejudices, and expressed themselves as in harmony with the position of the apostle, and sent an address to the churches to that effect. But the same battle was again to be fought, the same prejudices once more to be met.

Paul now gave his brethren an account of his labors since he parted with them four years before, and "declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry." As he described the work at Ephesus, which had resulted in raising up that large church in the very stronghold of heathenism, none could listen without interest. But he necessarily touched upon points that would irritate those who had cherished prejudice against him. He could not recount his experience in Galatia without stating the difficulties which he had encountered from those *Judaizing teachers* who had attempted to misrepresent his teaching and pervert his converts. In describing the work at Corinth, he could but mention those who had spread confusion and strife among the church there. Yet he related all with great gentleness and courtesy, carefully avoiding everything that would unnecessarily wound his brethren, and dwelling especially upon topics where he knew they could harmonize.

The effort was not without good results. The Spirit of God impressed the minds of the

brethren and affected their hearts. The tidings of the progress of the gospel, the evidence that the power of God was working with the apostle's efforts, softened their feelings toward Paul, and convinced them that their prejudice against him was unfounded; and they glorified God for the wonders of his grace. At the close of Paul's address, the brethren joined in a season of solemn praise, and the **Amen**, expressive of their hearty sanction of his work, was swelled by many voices.

But beneath this apparent harmony, prejudice and dissatisfaction were still smouldering. *Some in the church were still striving to mold Christianity after the old customs and ceremonies that were to pass away at the death of Christ.* They felt that the work of preaching the gospel must be conducted according to their opinions. If Paul would labor in accordance with these ideas, they would acknowledge and sustain his work; otherwise they would discard it.

The elders of the church had been at fault in allowing themselves to be influenced by the enemies of the apostle. But when they heard from his own lips an account of the work he had been doing, it assumed a different aspect. They could not condemn his manner of labor; they were convinced that it bore the signet of Heaven. *The liberal contributions* from the new churches he had raised up, testified to the power of the truth. *They saw that they had been held in bondage by the Jewish customs and traditions, and that the work of the gospel had been greatly hindered by their efforts to maintain the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile.*

Now was the golden opportunity for these leading men to frankly confess that God had wrought through Paul, and that they were wrong in permitting the reports of his enemies to create jealousy and prejudice against him. But instead of doing justice to the one whom they had injured, they still appeared to hold him responsible for the existing prejudice, as though he had given them cause for such feelings. They did not nobly stand in his defense, and endeavor to show the disaffected party their error; but they threw the burden wholly upon Paul, counseling him to pursue a course for the removal of all misapprehension. They responded to his testimony in these words: "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law. And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together; for they will hear that thou art come. Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads; and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication."

*The brethren hoped that by this act Paul might give a decisive contradiction of the false reports concerning him. But while James assured Paul that the decision of the former council (Acts 15) concerning the Gentile converts and the *ceremonial* law still held good, the advice given was not consistent with that decision which had also been sanctioned by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God did not prompt this advice. It was the fruit of **cowardice**. By*

non-conformity to the ceremonial law, Christians would bring upon themselves the hatred of the unbelieving Jews, and expose themselves to severe persecution. The Sanhedrim was doing its utmost to hinder the progress of the gospel. Men were chosen by this body to follow up the apostles, especially Paul, and in every possible way oppose them in their work. Should the believers in Christ be condemned before the Sanhedrim as breakers of the law, they would bring upon themselves swift and severe punishment as apostates from the Jewish faith.

Here is a decisive refutation of the claims so often made, that Christ and his apostles violated the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. Could the sin of Sabbath breaking have been fastened upon Christ or Stephen or others who died for their faith, men would not have been suborned to bear false witness against them to furnish some pretext for their condemnation. One such instance of transgression of the law would have placed the Christians in the power of their enemies. Their carefulness to show the utmost respect for customs and ceremonies of minor importance is an evidence that it would have been impossible for them to violate the Sabbath of the fourth commandment without suffering the severest penalty.

The disciples themselves yet cherished a regard for the *ceremonial* law, and were too willing to make concessions, hoping by so doing to gain the confidence of their countrymen, remove their prejudice, and win them to faith in Christ as the world's Redeemer. Paul's great object in visiting Jerusalem was to conciliate the church of Palestine. So long as they continued to cherish prejudice against him, they were constantly working to counteract his influence. He felt that if he could by any lawful concession on his part win them to the truth, he would remove a very great obstacle to the success of the gospel in other places. **But he was not authorized of God to concede so much as they had asked. This concession was not in harmony with his teachings, nor with the firm integrity of his character.** His advisers were not infallible. Though some of these men wrote under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, yet when not under its direct influence they sometimes erred. It will be remembered that on one occasion Paul withstood Peter to the face because he was acting a double part.

When we consider Paul's great desire to be in harmony with his brethren, his tenderness of spirit toward the weak in faith, his reverence for the apostles who had been with Christ, and for James, the brother of the Lord, and his purpose to become all things to all men as far as he could do this and not sacrifice principle,—when we consider all this, it is less surprising that he was constrained to deviate from his firm, decided course of action. **But instead of accomplishing the desired object, these efforts for conciliation only precipitated the crisis, hastened the predicted sufferings of Paul, separated him from his brethren in his labors, deprived the church of one of its strongest pillars, and brought sorrow to Christian hearts in every land.**

Desire of Ages

pg. 465

The great sacrifice has been made. . . . ***There is now an end to all sacrifices and offerings for sin.***

Patriarchs and Prophets

Chapter 52.
The Annual Feasts
page 539

On the fourteenth day of the month, at even, the Passover was celebrated, its solemn, impressive ceremonies commemorating the deliverance from bondage in Egypt, and pointing forward to the sacrifice that should deliver from the bondage of sin. When the Saviour yielded up His life on Calvary, the significance of *the Passover ceased, and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper was instituted as a memorial of the same event* of which the *Passover* had been a type.

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Men and women may study the will of God with profit. Let young men and young women, while the dew of youth is upon them, begin to study the word of God, which expresses his will. The steps of Christ are certainly marked out in the word. God where they can be found to day. Do not seek to go back to the land where Christ's feet trod ages ago. Christ says: "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." We can know far more of Christ by following him step by step in the work of redemption, seeking the lost and the perishing, than by journeying to old Jerusalem. **Christ** has taken his people into his church. *He has swept away every ceremony of the ancient type. He has given no liberty to restore these rites, or to substitute anything that will recall the old literal sacrifices.* The Lord requires of his people spiritual sacrifices alone. Everything pertaining to his worship is placed under the superintendence of his Holy Spirit. Jesus said that the Father would send the Holy Spirit in his name to teach his disciples all things, and to bring all things unto their remembrance that he had said unto them. The curse rests upon Jerusalem. The Lord has obliterated those things which men would worship in and about Jerusalem, yet many hold in reverence literal objects in Palestine, while they neglect to behold Jesus as their advocate in the heaven of heavens.

Then the veil of the temple was rent in twain, showing that the sacredness and significance of the sacrificial service had departed. *The time had come for the earthly sacrifice and oblation to cease.* {DA 233.2}

Acts 3:18 But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, *he hath so fulfilled.*

Luke 22:37 For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: *for the things concerning me have an end.*

When Caiaphas rent his garment, his act was significant of the place that the Jewish nation as a nation would thereafter occupy toward God. The once favored people of God were

separating themselves from Him, and were fast becoming a people disowned by Jehovah. When Christ upon the cross cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30), and the *veil* of the temple was rent in twain, the Holy Watcher declared that the Jewish people had rejected Him who was the *antitype of all their types, the substance of all their shadows*. Israel was divorced from God. Well might Caiaphas then rend his official robes, which signified that he claimed to be a representative of the great High Priest; for no longer had they any meaning for him or for the people. Well might the high priest rend his robes in horror for himself and for the nation. {DA 709.4}

In Remembrance of Me

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Luke 22:19. {FLB 300.1}

In the last Passover our Lord observed with His disciples, He instituted the Lord's Supper in place of the Passover, to be observed in memory of His death. {FLB 300.2}

The national festival of the Jews was to pass away forever. *The service which Christ established was to be observed by His followers in all lands and through all ages. {FLB 300.3}*

In the Galatian churches, open, unmasked error was supplanting the gospel message. *Christ, the true foundation of the faith, was virtually renounced for the obsolete ceremonies of Judaism.* The apostle saw that if the believers in Galatia were saved from the dangerous influences which threatened them, the most decisive measures must be taken, the sharpest warnings given. {AA 385.2}

To substitute the external forms of religion for holiness of heart and life, is still as pleasing to the unrenewed nature as in the days of the apostles. For this reason, false teachers abound, and the people listen eagerly to their delusive doctrines. It is Satan's studied effort to divert the minds of men from the one way of salvation, --faith in Christ, and obedience to the law of God. In every age the arch-enemy adapts his temptations to the prejudices or inclinations of the people. In apostolic times he led the Jews to exalt the ceremonial law, and reject Christ; at the present day he induces many professed Christians, under the pretense of honoring Christ, to cast contempt upon the moral law, and teach that its precepts may be transgressed with impunity. It is the duty of every faithful servant of God, to firmly and decidedly withstand these perverters of the faith, and to fearlessly expose their errors by the word of truth. {LP 192.2}