

THE ENCOURAGING WORD

Introduction

- 1) One of the earliest written documents from the apostles of Jesus was a letter sent to the Gentile brethren in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia (Acts 15:22-29)
- 2) The effect of this letter was *encouragement* (v. 31; “consolation” KJV comfort)
- 3) *Encouragement* is something that is constantly desired and needed by all people
- 4) Spiritual encouragement is much needed today in the church among brethren in the Lord

I) **The Constant Need for Encouragement**

- A) *Barnabas* – nicknamed “son of encouragement” by the apostles (Actrs 4:36)
 - 1) Outstanding as an encourager of others (Acts 11:22-23)
- B) *Paul* was an encourager of brethren (Acts 16:40; 20:1-2)
 - 1) Sent others to encourage brethren (1 Thess. 3:1-2)
 - 2) Gained encouragement from brethren (Rom. 1:11-12)
- C) They encouraged others in the ways of the truth of the Lord Jesus (Col. 2:1-3)

II) **Beware of Bad Encouragement**

- A) Bad encouragement urges someone to do what is wrong (Gen. 3:4-6)
- B) Bad encouragement tells someone what they want to hear regardless of the truth (2 Chron. 18:12-13)
- C) Bad encouragement motivates people to continue doing evil (2 Chron. 28:19; Psa. 64:5)

III) **The Encouraging Letter (Acts 15:22-29)**

- A) Background of the dispute and the gathering in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1ff)
- B) This letter greatly encouraged the brethren because:
 - 1) It was based in the divine authority of the Holy Spirit and the apostles (vv. 24, 28)
 - 2) It clearly identified the difference between true and false teachings (vv. 24, 29)
- C) The brethren “rejoiced over its encouragement” (v. 31)
 - 1) And the brethren continued to be exhorted and strengthened by the many words of the prophets Judas and Silas, and the teaching and preaching of the word of God by Paul and Barnabas (vv. 32, 35)

IV) **How the Word of God Encourages Us Today**

- A) Edifies us (Acts 20:32)
- B) Comforts us (1 Thess. 4:18; 5:11)
- C) Informs us (Col. 1:5)
- D) Restricts us (1 Cor. 4:6)
- E) Prepares us (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- F) Judges us (Heb. 4:12)

Conclusion

It is wonderful to **encourage** others and to **be encouraged** by others. The absolute best way to be encouraged is to actively encourage others in the Lord (1 Thess. 5:14; Heb. 3:13). Everyone needs spiritual encouragement – to obey the gospel, to grow into maturity, to remain faithful in difficult times, to repent of sin, to return to the Lord and the church, to always stand for the truth. The Lord has spoken – *let us be encouraged in the word of the Lord!*