

15:24 *Troubled with Words*

The Responsibility to Defend the Faith.

Chrysostom: You⁴ have received as your patrimony the desire never to allow the teachings of our faith to degenerate into heresy. What makes this clear? In the time of your ancestors, people came here from Judea who were muddying the clear waters of the doctrine taught by the apostles. They were exhorting your ancestors to practice circumcision and to observe the Mosaic Law. Those who then lived in your city did not remain silent, nor did they put up with this innovation. They were like courageous hounds who saw wolves attacking and destroying the entire flock. They sprang after the wolves and did not let up chasing them and driving them away. They saw to it that the apostles from every corner of the world sent them their decision in the form of a letter that would protect them from any attack launched against the faithful by those innovators and all such as might come thereafter. Against the Anomoeans 2.4–5.⁵

15:26 *Risking Their Lives for the Sake of Christ*

These Have a Right to Be Believed.

Chrysostom: As they are “beloved,” they will not be dismissed. As they “have risked their lives,” they have a right to be believed. “We have sent” them as well, it says, to announce the same things by word of mouth. For it was necessary that there be more than the letter alone, lest they should say that they said one thing instead of another. The praise bestowed on Paul stopped their mouths. For Paul came neither by himself nor with Barnabas alone but was accompanied by others from the church (and not only by those from Jerusalem), so that he should not be suspected. It shows that they have a right to be believed. Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 33.⁶

15:28 *It Seemed Good*

Of the Spirit, but Also Spoken by People.

Chrysostom: “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.” Why did they add “and to us,” when “to the Holy Spirit” was enough? The latter prevents them from thinking it came of people, while the former teaches them that they too welcome [the Gentiles], even though they [as Jewish Christians] are circumcised. They have to speak to people who are still weak and afraid of them. This is the reason why this is added as well. Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 33.⁷

From the Holy Spirit.

Cyril of Jerusalem: They indicated clearly by what they wrote that though the decree had been written by men who were apostles, it was from the Holy Spirit and universal. Barnabas and Paul took this decree and confirmed it to the whole world. Catechetical Lecture 17.29.⁸

15:29 *Abstain from Sacrifices to Idols***Divine Law Completes Human Law.**

Origen: Now in these precepts where it says that no other burden ought to be imposed on Gentile believers except abstinence from the sacrifices of idols, from blood, from what has been suffocated and from fornication, homicide is not forbidden, nor adultery, nor theft, nor homosexual acts, nor other crimes that are punished by divine and human laws. But if it is saying that Christians must observe only that which it has recounted, it will appear to some that it granted license concerning the rest. But consider how the Holy Spirit manages affairs: since other crimes are avenged by laws of the world, it seemed superfluous for those things, which are sufficiently covered by human law, also to have been forbidden by divine law. It only decreed those things about which human law had said nothing and which seemed proper to religion. Commentary on Romans 9.28.¹¹