

Acts 15.1-35

Jesus + Nothing = Salvation

Paul & Barn. Returned from 1st M trip to SENDING Church in ANTIOCH

14.26,27....they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

YES! God ACCEPTS Everyone – But what is REQUIREMENT to Come?

Ch 15 – First Council of Xtian Church – Impt Q – **How to be SAVED?**

TRUE Christian IF NOT Read Bible thru in YR? Or Never Read It?

Do NOT JOIN a Local CHURCH? Or NEVER even Come to church?

Do NOT quit Smoking? DRINKING? Swearing? PORN? Gossiping?

Can someone be Christian & NOT Explain the Trinity? Or Understand It?

1. The Dispute

a. Sincere 2 X's "Moses must COMPLETE what Jesus BEGAN"

v. 1 "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, *you cannot be saved.*"

v. 5 "necessary to circumcise them & order to keep the law of Moses"

RADAR On? Listen Carefully? DEAD Wrong! FALSE Gospel

Acts 15 Biggest Possible Deal > Get this WRONG, All WILL BE LOST

LOSE the Gospel! – Matter of HEAVEN and HELL – How to be Saved!

v. 5 some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees...

PHARISEES – Usually we BOO and HISS at Mention of their GROUP

Paul 1 of Pharisees who took Bold Stand – Confess JESUS as MESSIAH

10 yrs after Cornelius – Trickle of Gentiles into Church Now TORRENT

Jews Feared Influx of Gentiles > "take away OUR church" > Deacon O.!

Gentiles WELCOME > Same GROUND as PROSELYTES to JUDAISM

Circumcision & FULL OBSERVANCE of the MOSAIC Law Expected

b. Strong Challenge to Sufficiency of Jesus Christ ALONE for Salvation

v. 2 Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them

Gentiles 2nd Class Citizens? OUTER Court Gentiles? Inner ONLY Jews?

Letter from Assembly to ANTIOCH Church contained APOLOGY:

v. 24 We heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you w/ words, unsettling your minds, altho we gave them no instructions...

c. Separation? When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong...I said to Peter in front of them all, "You're a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile & not like a Jew. How is it, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?" Galatians 2.8-14

Many Examples – Churches & Denom – Shift to Allow Belief of Leader

Women should NOT Be Pastors > Beloved Woman, No Men Volunteer

Pastor Not be DIVORCED – Favorite Pastor gets Divorce – Not So Bad!

Recently heard “I was not a fan of Gay Marriage, but I just love our New Pastor’s Husband! --- and their New Pastor is a MAN!

Leaders with WRONG Views – Influence ALL in Group to Follow

Entire Structure of Church Soon ENDORSES the Wrong Views

Jeopardized Unity/ TRUTH Jesus DIED Establish – Sent Spirit to Affirm Grace Only Good

News Chapel > Grace & Works Not-So-Good-News Ch

2. The Deliberation

a. God's Work What would Peter say? Opened Mouth to Change FEET!

Elder Peter had been Publicly REBUKED by Younger Paul in GALATIA

Now OUT of Jerusalem Bunker > Fresh from MISSIONARY Travels

NO Personal DEFENSE – or DEFENSIVENESS – Focus on GOD

vs. 10,11 Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

Christian leaders battle over issues - not take sides. Ajith Fernando

v 7 by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of gospel & believe

v. 9 having cleansed their hearts by faith

v. 11 we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus

v. 10 why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

Law-keeping was SIN that took Israel to their GRAVES in Wilderness

LAW Never given to SAVE > But to SHOW how MUCH NEED Savior!

Of all the surviving words of Peter, those in verse 11 are perhaps the most gracious...Peter, the Jew, would have normally said it the other way around. He would have said, "We believe that they can be saved by grace through faith, just like us." That is they can be like us. But that was the issue. Do they have to become 'like us' or not? Because he knew the answer to the question Peter turned it around, saying, "*We believe that by grace even we Jews can be saved, just like the Gentiles.*"

James Boice

b. God's Wonders v. 12 The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.

Luke given us 2 Chapters of DETAILS of their EXPLOITS – 13 & 14

c. God's Word

Pharisees PERK UP – James GOOD JEWISH Boy – He'll Sort it out!

vs. 13-19 James spoke up: "Brothers, listen to me. Simeon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself. The words of the prophets are in agreement with this... "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God"

James: Bp of Church in Jerusalem / ½ Bro of Jesus, Bro of JUDE

'Camel Knees' - Long HOURS in Prayer in TEMPLE for Fellow JEWS

Experience is IMPORTANT – Scripture is DETERMINATIVE

Not NEW Message from PROPHET > OLD Message from Scriptures

Christian Faith is Religion of Revelation – God SPOKEN, We LISTEN

Councils have no authority in the church unless it can be shown that their conclusions are in accord with Scripture.

John Stott

Instead of ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC, APOSTOLIC Church

3. The Decision

a. **Sunshine** Both Message & Method Vital to Establish Unity in Truth

v. 6 apostles and elders were gathered together to consider this matter

Sunshine Law: Business of People conducted OPENLY – All can HEAR

CLEARING the AIR > Making Sure People do not FEEL STIFLED

v. 7 After there had been much debate > EVERYONE chance to Speak

b. **Shouting** v 2 Paul & Barn. had no small dissension & debate w/ them

Some think SIGN of FELLOWSHIP to AGREE on EVERYTHING

True Fellowship WORK thru Difference for GLORY of Christ

v. 7 ‘much debate’ = HEATED DEBATE, Not Just Exchange of Ideas

c. **Silence** v. 12 all the assembly fell silent, and they listened...

Sometimes I tell Wife “people Listening QUIETLY when I preached”

She POPS my BUBBLE “That’s because they were ASLEEP”

v. 13 After they finished... NOT Interrupted/ Got Out All Wanted to Say

d. **Seeking** v. 22 seemed good to the apostles and elders, w/whole church

Consensus that Will of Holy Spirit was Arrived Upon

UNITY of ONE SPIRIT who dwelt IN ALL of them – ONE TEMPLE

An overwhelming majority often leaves behind it a minority disaffected and dangerous.

G. Campbell Morgan

DETAIL Not Given > How LONG this TAKE? / VOTING is QUICKER

Unity will MOVE the ENTIRE WORK of Church FORWARD

SEND 4 Guys on Long, Expensive Trip – Paul, Barnabas, Judas, Silas

BOLD PUBLIC Declaration v. 28 seemed good to Holy Spirit and to us...

There is no parallel for such a phrase to pronounce a corporate decision by a deliberative body.

Wilfred Knox

e. **Standing Together** – No CONFLICT between PAUL and JAMES

Purpose of Council: UNITE amidst ATTACK – Inward or Outward

vs. 22 Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas... “our dear friends Barnabas and Paul -- men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing”

Exhortation – GLORY of God & ADVANCE of His GLOBAL Mission

LETTER Makes DECISION CLEAR & AUTHORITATIVE

Send with 2 MESSENGERS – Decision is PERSONAL and PASTORAL

Peter’s FINAL Appearance in ACTS: Goes OUT in BLAZE of GLORY

The legitimation of the mission to Gentiles is Peter’s last work. M. Hengel

v. 23 To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia...

GEOGRAPHICAL LIMITS of the Christian Church AT THAT TIME!

v. 28 It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you

NOT Difficult – NOT Burden – SEEMS Good - WOULD DO WELL

Letter NOT too BURDENSOME > HAPPY COMPROMISE for All Sides

Tone of CARE and CONCERN for THEIR GOOD and GOD’S GLORY!

4. The Declaration

WELCOME into Family / WARNED to Live Like Family Member

Circumcision NOT Required > Commitment to Live for CHRIST IS

v. 20 abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood

To become Christians, Gentiles need not become Jews, but they cannot remain pagans!

Dennis Johnson

a. Holiness of Believer vs. 20 & 29 abstain from...sexual immorality

Double Emphasis for SEX SATURATED 1st C World & 21st C WORLD

We are saved by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. True faith results in good deeds, including adherence to the moral law.

James Boice

2011 Wife & I > Spoke Marriage to Med. Students Mulago Med School

UGANDA > 50% of all young people had STD’s > Many had AIDS

NOT Interested in Vs on Fornication: More interest in **EXPERIENCE**

SEX before MARRIAGE?? With ANOTHER Since been MARRIED?

Postmodern – No Authority of Scripture – What about EXPERIENCE?

By GRACE our Answer was NO! – What about YOU? – Call to Holiness!

b. Unity of the Church v. 21 For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath."

Primary Concern Missionary > Don't Contradict LAW they hear Weekly

Church Exists by BREAKING BREAD – How can EAT Together?

Gentile SITTING at TABLE Next to YOU – Drinking BLOOD! – YUCK!

NOT Appeasing the JEWS but DO NOT Want to ALIENATE the JEWS

Strive to ATTRACT by GOOD WORKS & WORDS the Jewish People

c. Glory of God seen in Saving of Jew and Gentile by Grace Alone

v. 32 Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, **said much**

GOAL: Edification of Church / Advance of Gospel / GLORY of God

He is ROBBED by Our PRIDE and IDOLATRY

IDOLATRY prevalent in 1st C Roman Emp > MEAT to Idols

PRIDE = IDOLATRY We think Earn FAVOR, Gain Salvation Ourselves

RELYING on WORKS is SAYING you do NOT NEED a SAVIOR

The only thing that we contribute to the plan of salvation is the sin to make it necessary.

Eric Alexander

v. 31 And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement...32 encouraged and strengthened the brothers...

33 ...they were sent off in peace by the brothers...35 Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord!

No Greater JOY than Receiving the Saving Grace of God in JESUS

Our Prayer of Confession

Almighty God, you have accepted our Lord's sacrifice for our salvation. By your power you have raised him from the dead, you have clothed him again with flesh so that his disciples might recognize him.

We humbly confess that, while we know the story and believe it, it often has made too little difference in our lives, and at times we have been silent when we should have spoken of it. Forgive us, we pray, of these sins.

Enable us today to reflect more deeply on the faithful witness of your Word – the sure testimony of the prophets and apostles. Thank you for this Council in Jerusalem and its united witness to your free and undeserved salvation. Thank you for your gift of forgiveness, Risen Lord. Amen.

Thank the Lord for your New Life in Christ

Our Affirmation of Faith

If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those who fall asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. Thanks be to our God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! (from 1 Corinthians 15)