

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 21ST, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

### DEBATE (ACTS 15:1-5) SAVED THROUGH THE LAW... NOPE!

We've seen these Christian Jews before who believed that Gentiles must conform to the Mosaic law to be truly saved. These came to Antioch and began to teach the same thing. Paul and Barnabas wouldn't have it.

- The gospel is very simple: **God the Son, Jesus, took on flesh, died for sinners to satisfy God's wrath, and rose the third day.**

### DEBATE IS SOMETIMES NECESSARY

Christianity was about 15 years old. It was still seen as a sect of Judaism by many. Some Jews in the church wanted to keep it that way. But Christianity was a new covenant replacing the old which had passed away. Jerusalem, the hub of the church at that time, was ground zero for this debate to be settled: **must Gentiles submit to Judaism to be saved?**

### MINISTRY AS WE GO

Paul, Barnabas, and some others (**ministry is for God's glory not for personal fame**) made their way south to Jerusalem from Antioch. As they went, they did ministry. They encouraged "mixed" churches with the news of the conversion of the Gentiles to Christ.

- We don't go to do ministry; we minister as we go.

### THE POWER OF A TESTIMONY

The news of Gentiles converting to Christianity "**brought great joy**" to the churches.

- **Too many Christians find the works of God uninspiring. We barely react to the salvation of a lost one, the power of the Word, or the testimony of a saint. God is always at work if we have eyes to see and ears to hear. Let's rejoice and be glad!**

### JESUS + ?

The church and its leaders welcomed the group and listened to their report. The Jewish Christians, with ties to the Pharisees, wanted to add circumcision and keeping the law of Moses to repentance and faith.

- **If faith alone in Christ alone by grace alone can't save us, we have no hope. Only Jesus can save sinners.**

### UNABLE (ACTS 15:6-11)

#### THE LEADERSHIP BEGAN DISCUSSION

Once the question was identified, the apostles and leaders began deliberations. After much debate Peter addressed them. He made clear that all that had occurred with the salvation of the Gentiles was according to God's plan and replayed all that had happened.

- **We should take joy in knowing God had His eye on us before we were born** (Psalm 139:16).

### NO DISTINCTION

Peter's retelling focuses on what the Jews and Gentiles have in common: the condition of their hearts. They are all sinners who need a Savior. Salvation is a gift of grace, not by works. They all need the Holy Spirit to indwell and change them. This doesn't happen by obedience to the law but by repentance and faith.

- **Sin is a universal problem humbling us.**

### EXPOSURE, NOT RELIEF

Peter called the Mosaic law a yoke that the Jews were unable to bear. This doesn't mean the law was bad, but that its purpose wasn't to save, but to point out the need everyone has for a Savior. Now that the Savior had come fulfilling all the law demanded, relief from the guilt and shame of failure to keep the law was removed.

- **Amazing grace that saved a wretch like me.**

### WELCOMED (ACTS 15:12-21)

#### MORE STORIES OF GOD'S GRACE TO GENTILES

After Peter spoke, Paul and Barnabas told all God had done through them for His glory for the salvation of the Gentiles.

- This is a pivotal moment in the life of the Church. Peter, the chief spokesman for the apostles, had spoken. Paul, perhaps the most famous convert to Christianity up until that time, had spoken. **What would be the response?**

### JAMES, THE LEADER OF THE JERUSALEM CHURCH

The half-brother of Jesus, James, seems to be the leader who now speaks to the leaders. Having seen all God had done since Jesus ascended and the Church was birthed, James wonderfully put all the pieces together by wisdom of the Spirit and the Word.

- **Reading the Bible with the Spirit's help opens us up to wondrous stuff** (Psalm 119:18). **NOT PROOF TEXTING BUT PROOF FROM THE TEXT**

From Peter's testimony, James showed from the OT how Amos and Isaiah had foretold the beauty of God's grace to all humanity; yes, even the Gentiles.

- **Scripture judged and affirmed their experiences, not the other way around. It's important that we see all of life through the lens/filter of the Bible.**

### THE OUTCOME

How could multi-ethnic people become one Church in Christ? Oneness in Christ is established by trust in Jesus alone. Making different ethnic groups one is a little more difficult. James asked the Gentiles to abstain from some practices that were particularly vile to the Jewish Believers.

- **Don't elevate preferences to the level of the gospel. But don't intentionally offend either.**

### IN CHRIST ALONE

- We must beware of adding non-essential baggage to the gospel which may intentionally, or unintentionally, muddy up the beauty and simplicity of the gospel.
- If we offer a gospel to people that is "Jesus plus (fill in the blank)," we aren't really offering the gospel. **Do we believe that faith in Jesus is enough?**

### WHY NOT BY WORKS?

- Salvation that requires we earn it can only lead to two places: **pride or despair**. Pride will come from thinking we are better than others. Despair will come from thinking we'll never be good enough.
- Jesus did all the "work" so we don't have to. We have to fight minimizing the beauty and power of all Jesus did for us.

### THE TIGHTROPE OF FREEDOM IN CHRIST

- For the Church to be one under Christ, in spite of different ethnicities and backgrounds, requires much humility from all parties.
- **Freedom in Christ is never to be used as a hammer to condone offending someone by making non-essentials essential.**
- **Laying aside non-essential preferences for the sake of the gospel shows maturity in Jesus.**

### OUR COMMON PROBLEM AND HOPE

- Our common problem is we are sinners and stand condemned before our righteous Judge.
- The wages of our sin is eternal death.
- Jesus paid for our sins by His death and through His resurrection.
- **There is no condemnation in Christ.**
- **All who repent and believe will be saved.**