

The Gospel Saved Through The Grace of The Lord Jesus (Acts 15:1-16:5)

Acts 14 ended with the good news that a door had been opened to the Gentiles. It seemed that there was no stopping the Gospel. But wait! It seems there may be a problem. How are Gentiles meant to walk through the door that has been opened to them? There are some Jewish Christians who believe that the Gentiles can become Christians, but they must become Jews first.

1. The Book of Acts tells us that the early church was primarily comprised of Jews.
2. In chapter 8 we read about:
 - A. The gospel spreading to the Samaritans, who were ethnically mixed Jews-Gentiles.
 - B. We read that many Samaritans received Christ as Savior.
3. In chapter 10, the apostle Peter was the first to take the gospel specifically to the Gentiles, and many received Christ as Savior.
4. In chapters 13-14, Paul and Barnabas had a very fruitful ministry among the Gentiles. All of these Gentiles turning to faith in Christ caused concern among the Jewish believers. We see this concern expressed in Acts 11:1-18, and the issues that caused concern were ultimately decided upon at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. The issues centered on two main questions:
 - A. Do Gentiles have to become Jews before they can become Christians? (circumcision, offer a sacrifice, proselyte baptism, follow the law)
 - B. Do Gentiles have to observe the Mosaic Law after they become Christians? (Acts 15:1-5)
5. What is the Gospel? ("grace alone through faith alone" (15:11))

Acts 15:11 "'But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

- A. In verses 7-11, Peter spoke of his ministry with the Gentiles (Chapter 10).
 - B. He focused on the fact that the Holy Spirit was given to uncircumcised Gentiles in precisely the same manner the Holy Spirit was given to the apostles and Jewish believers on the day of Pentecost.
 - C. This led Peter to the conclusion that there should be no "placing a yoke on the neck of the Gentile disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear" (15:10).
 - D. Jesus' half-brother James, who had become a leader of the church in Jerusalem, agreed with Peter and said, "Therefore, it is my judgment that we do not cause trouble for those from the Gentiles who are turning to God" (19).
6. The Jerusalem Council did give the Gentile believers four "rules" that Christians should live by. These were not rules the Gentiles must follow in order to be saved, but rules to build harmony between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the first century. The four rules were:
1. Gentile Christians should abstain from food polluted by idols.
 2. Sexual immorality.

3. The meat of strangled animals.
4. Blood.

7. The instructions were not intended to guarantee salvation but to promote peace within the early church.

- A. These issues are still very much alive in the church today. There are still groups teaching that Christians must obey the OT Law.
- B. Whether it is the Sabbath day or the food laws or all of the OT Law outside of the sacrificial system—there are groups that declare observance of the Law is either required for salvation or at least a crucially important aspect of the Christian life.

8. The call of the Jerusalem Council was for the Jewish and Gentile cultures within the Antioch church to come together around Christ. This meant that Gentile Christians needed to forsake their former pagan practices associated with idolatry (sexual immorality and food practices). There is no mention of the Sabbath.

- A. Again, these rules were not requirements for salvation. Salvation is by grace for both Jews and Gentiles (15:11).
- B. A rule that would benefit the church today—“Limit your liberty for the sake of love?” How might this rule help us to serve other believers in our day.

9. We must understand the gospel is not Jesus plus something or someone else. Jesus alone saves.

- A. When we lose sight of Jesus, it can cause us to say and do things we know are wrong.
- B. When Peter went to Antioch (Syria), Paul opposed him (Gal. 2:11-14) because he had stopped engaging with Gentiles out of fear of the Jewish leaders (Gal. 2:11). He had been eating with the Gentile believers, but when a group of Jews arrived from Jerusalem, Peter withdrew from the Gentile crowd. This caused many of the Jews, including men like Barnabas, to fall into error. Paul said to him, “But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?” (Gal. 2:14)
- C. Here’s the point—Jesus is enough.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 “For I handed down to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,”

1 Corinthians 3:11 “For no one can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Acts 4:12 “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among mankind by which we must be saved.”

Galatians 2:21 “I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”

Grace alone through faith alone

