

Living with Confidence and Freedom in the Grace of God

Acts 15:1-29

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Acts 15:1-4

Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. 3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both **Phoenicia and Samaria**, . . .



Acts 15:3-4

. . . they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. 4 When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them.

Acts 15:1, 5

Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

⁵ *But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."*

?? - Can you be saved apart from circumcision?

?? - Can you be saved apart from circumcision and obeying the Law of Moses?

?? - What “equation” best represents the life of grace made available in Christ Jesus?

Circumcision

Faith

Hear the Gospel

Holy Living

Holy Spirit

Holy Works

Observe the Law

Repentance

Salvation (Saved)

_____ + _____ + _____ + _____ = _____ + _____ + _____ + _____

I) God's "equation" for a life of grace in Christ must be clearly understood (v.1-11).

Acts 15:6-9, 11 Peter's Report of God's Work

*The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. 7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days **God made a choice among you**, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, . . .*

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

?? - What “equation” best represents the life of grace made available in Christ Jesus?

Hear the Gospel + (Faith + Repentance) (v.7; 20:21)

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Salvation

(“saved through the GRACE of the Lord Jesus,” v.11)

Acts 20:20-21

. . . I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, ²¹ solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

II) Six reasons to confidently believe the good news of grace (7-28):

- 1) God pursued the Gentiles (v.7).
- 2) God's Spirit displayed His acceptance by:
 - a. Indwelling those who believed (v. 8-9, 28).

Hear the Gospel + (Faith + Repentance) (v.7; 20:21)

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Galatians 3:2-3

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Acts 15:8-9

Peter's Report of God's Work

"And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

Hear the Gospel + (Repentance + Faith) (v.7; 20:21)

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Salvation

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Holy Spirit + Holy Living + Holy Works

(cleansed hearts by faith, v.9)

Acts 15:10-12

"Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11 "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

II) Six reasons to confidently believe the good news of grace (7-28):

5) Good sense agrees with God's truth (v. 10, 19).

3) God's grace is the only grounds for justification for everyone (v11; Eph. 2:1-10).

3) God's grace is the only grounds for justification for everyone -- put it to the test in view of

» Eph. 2:1-10

» James 2:14-26

» Romans 3:28-4:12

Hear the Gospel + (Repentance + Faith) (v.7; 20:21)

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Acts 15:10-12 **Paul & Barnabas' Report of God's Work**

12 ¶ All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

II) Six reasons to confidently believe the good news of grace:

2) God's Spirit displayed His acceptance by:

a. Indwelling those who believed.

b. Signs and wonders done among the Gentiles (v.12).

Acts 15:13-18 **James “the Just” (Jesus’ brother) says . . .**

*After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying,
"Brethren, listen to me. 14 "Simeon has related how God first
concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a
people for His name. 15 "With this the words of the Prophets
agree, just as it is written, 16 'AFTER THESE THINGS I will
return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID
WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I
WILL RESTORE IT, 17 SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY
SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY
MY NAME,' 18 SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS
KNOWN FROM LONG AGO.*

II) Reasons to confidently believe the good news of grace:

**4) God’s Word foretold his plan to reach the nations
(v.13-18; Amos 9:11-12).**

II) Reasons to confidently believe the good news of grace:

6) God's representatives discerned this authoritative truth.

Acts 15:19, 22-23, 28 Agreement Among God's People

"Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, . . .

22 ¶ Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas-- Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, 23 and they sent this letter by them, "The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings.

28 "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials:

III) Healthy limits ensure everyone enjoys freedom in the Lord (v.20, 29; 2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Pet. 2:16).

Acts 15:20-21 / v. 29

*... but that we write to them that they abstain from
things contaminated by idols / things sacrificed to idols
and from fornication / and from fornication
and from what is strangled / and from things strangled
and from blood. / and from blood*

21 "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

III) Healthy limits ensure everyone enjoys freedom in the Lord (v.20, 29; 2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Pet. 2:16).

Legalism = bondage to “the law”.

- *Dissension – divided people (v.2)*
- *Debate – wasted CPU cycles (v.2, 7)*
- *Troubled with an extra burden (v.19)*
- *Disturbing others (v.24)*
- *Unsettling their souls (v.24)*
- *Laying on a burden (v. 28)*

License to sin = bondage to sin.

Liberty = life within limits = free and safe to “play”.

III) Healthy limits ensure everyone enjoys freedom in the Lord (v.20, 29; 2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Pet. 2:16).

Acts 15:24-27

"Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls, 25 it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 "Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth.

?? - How can you be sure that this good news is really true?

Hear the Gospel + (Repentance + Faith) (v.7; 20:21)

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Salvation

("saved through the GRACE of the Lord Jesus," v.11)

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Holy Spirit + Holy Living + Holy Works

(cleansed hearts by faith, v.9)

~~Circumcision~~

~~Observe the Law~~

Applying God's Word to Life

1. How does your personal “equation” for life compare to God’s grace-filled offer?
2. How would you describe your level of confidence in the gospel of grace through faith in Jesus Christ? Why?
3. What are some things you are tempted to add in or subtract out of God’s equation for a life of grace?
4. What are some freedoms you would willingly sacrifice if you knew you could help others understand God better?

If you would like others to pray with you . . .