

Q: We are saved by God’s grace through faith (trust) in Christ alone, not by obeying the OT Law. The Law pointed out how we could never measure up to God’s holy standards on our own. So He sent His Son to rescue us. How does knowing this truth set us free then to *want* to obey God and live for Him?

Q: (vv.19-29) The final conclusion also encouraged the new Gentile believers to abstain from what things?

Q: Keep in mind the context from which the Gentiles were being saved from. Sexual immorality of all kinds was common and rampant. Idol worship was common and any meat purchased was probably dedicated to these idols. How would such voluntary restrictions not only help their growing faith, but also not become a stumbling block to Jews also coming to Christ? (Exo 20:3; 34:14-15; 1 Cor 8). Today with our freedom in Christ, what might we need to (even temporarily) put aside in order to not be a stumbling block for others in their journey with Jesus?

PRAY: Lord, remind me of the joy of my salvation which is by Your grace, not my feeble efforts. Forgive me when I place any stumbling block in other’s way. May everyone know they too can receive salvation by faith, the same grace you have given to me. Help me to put aside my pride to see where I need to stop doing things that may be a hindrance to other’s growth in Christ. Help me to live by Your Spirit each day, for your glory, in Jesus’ name, Amen!

Many people have been turned off to the gospel message because they were exposed to a “false gospel” in the past. They were wrongly told that in order to be saved, they needed to trust in Jesus PLUS follow some rule to get right with God. This is tragic! The true gospel is a FREE gift from God. There is nothing we can add to the work of Christ on our behalf. We are saved completely and only by God’s grace alone, through faith in Christ alone, receiving His free offer of forgiveness of all sin, making us holy, redeeming us to a perfectly restored and permanent relationship with God. In Acts 15, some religious rule followers tried to add to the simple gospel but were boldly refuted by the apostles. Praise God for His grace!

Q: How would you define “legalism” in the church? What might be some examples of legalism? How can a Christ-follower discern between rules that are truly Biblical and those that are merely cultural or human-made?

Q: (15:1) Some Christians, steeped in their Jewish traditions, thought that those (Gentile) Christians who did not follow Jewish traditions (like circumcision) were not truly saved unless they did so as well. But how does the gospel change this way of thinking?

*God’s Covenant of circumcision (see Gen 17:13-14) was a “physical reminder of a spiritual truth.” It was a permanent reminder for all men of Israel that through their obedience to God, they were part of God’s family and were to faithfully obey, follow and worship Him only (and lead their families to follow this One True God as well).

Q: (vv.2-5) There was much discussion about this topic and the Antioch church sent Paul & Barnabas to seek the wisdom of the Apostles in Jerusalem. While there, they shared all that God had done. Why are testimonies so key to our spiritual growth?

Q: (Read 1 Cor 8) How does this situation compare to the one here in Acts 15? What counsel did Paul give to the Corinthian church? ____

Q: (Read Rom 14) Legalism can be defined as “the need to obey certain man-made rules in order to gain God’s approval or salvation.” How does Paul address this and how then are we to live?

Q: (15:2-7) What do we learn about *how* the early church handled such theological and other disagreements?

Q: (vv.7-11) How does Peter’s testimony prove that ethnic distinctions should not matter when it comes to how people are saved from their sins? (see Acts 10-11; Gal 3:28; Eph 2)

Q: (v.8-11) God “knows the heart” and gave the same Holy Spirit to Cornelius and other Gentiles as they trusted in Jesus. Why is this testimony so key for the Jewish believers hearing that? It is not by obedience to the Law that one is saved, but how are all people saved? (Gal 3:24)

Q: What is the role of the OT Law today? (i.e, Ten Commandments)

Q: How does James (the half brother of Jesus) show from the Old Testament (Amos 9:11-12; Jer 12:15) that it was God’s plan all along to also welcome the Gentiles into His family?

Q: (15:4,12) What evidence does Paul & Barnabas offer to prove that Gentiles could be saved without first becoming Jews and following their rules?

Q: How might Christ-followers today (even inadvertently) cloud the simple gospel message of God’s grace by faith in Christ, with man-made rules that they think people need to follow before coming to Christ? _____
