



We Must Stand for Truth

Scripture reading Acts 15:1-2

“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.”

Since the beginning of Christianity there have been those who have determined to add works to salvation. In Acts 15, Jewish believers were attempting to do this very thing. They were demanding outward evidence that a person really trusted Christ as their Saviour. They wanted proof through submission to the Jewish ordinance of circumcision. Throughout history, various Christian denominations have done this very thing.

Let me list a few:

1. If you are truly saved, you will get baptized.
2. If you are truly saved, you will be in church on a regular basis.
3. If you are truly saved, you would not use that kind of language.
4. If you are truly saved, you would not have fallen into that kind of sin.
5. If you are truly saved, you would not dress like that.
6. If you are truly saved, you would not listen to that kind of music.

The list could go on. You get the picture. They said, *“Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved”* (Acts 15:1).

The fact is that salvation is by grace through faith alone. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”* (Ephesians 2:8-9). Peter makes this clear when he states in verse 11, *“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”* This is a vital truth for Bible believing Christians, and, as well as other foundational truths must be defended when it is discredited. Though we are to endeavor, *“to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”* (Ephesians 4:3), we should not let that endeavor keep us from defending foundational truth when it is attacked. The deity of Christ, virgin birth, salvation by grace through faith alone. Those are foundational truths. Believe them, live them, preach them, practice them, and defend them BY FAITH.



Confronting False Teaching

Scripture reading Acts 15:3-11

“And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.... And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.”

In Acts 15, we not only learn that it is important to stand up for that which is truth, but we also learn how to do that and how to do it effectively. When Paul and Barnabus could make no head way with those who were spreading false doctrine, they determined to go back to the church from which these believers came. They returned to Jerusalem, which at this point was the source of the problem. They went to the apostles and the elders of that church to deal with the issue.

Look at the way they approached the situation.

1. They were positive and upbeat. “[D]eclaring the conversion of the Gentiles” (Acts 15:3). “[T]hey declared all things that God had done with them.” (Acts 15:4). A positive attitude is absolute if we are going to persuade people to believe the truth.
2. They went to people of authority. They went to the apostles and the elders. These were people who were respected in Christendom everywhere.
3. They allowed others to speak, first Peter and then later James.
4. They confirmed their teaching with the Scriptures *“And to this agree the words of the prophets”* (Acts 15:15).

The matter that was being discussed was one of the core issues of our biblical faith. Yet, it was addressed in a cordial and constructed manner and settled in a way that glory and honor to Christ.

We must stand for truth, but we must stand in such a way that our demeanor does not dishonor the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. When you stand for truth in a way that reflects the love of Jesus Christ, you stand BY FAITH.



Doctrinal Purity Will Cause Division

Scripture reading Acts 15:12-20

“Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:… Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols…”

This was the first Idea Day Summit. The big the idea at this summit was a foundational Bible truth: salvation by grace through faith alone. The attendees at this summit were notable indeed. Peter was there and was the dearest friend, humanly speaking, of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Paul and Barnabas were also there and chosen vessels of God used to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. The elders were in attendance and were from the very first church in Jerusalem. Then there was James the designated pastor of that Jerusalem church. Many believe he was the half-brother of Jesus. Not only were these superstars there, but the Bible indicates there were a multitude of others that were discussing this big idea. When the discussion was drawn to a close by James, they all agreed together that there were four reasons for division within the New Testament church.

The first is the *“pollutions of idols”* (Acts 15:20). The name of our God is very important. Over and over throughout Scripture, we are admonished that there is only one God. False belief about deity is not acceptable for the true child of God. When a scribe came to Jesus and asked Him, “Which commandment was premier?” Jesus’ response was to quote Deuteronomy 6:4. *“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might”* (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). There is no place in the life of a Bible believing Christian for any God but one. That God in the Old Testament goes by the name Jehovah. In the New Testament, we know Him by Jesus Christ. Jesus taught if you deny the Son, you deny the Father. Typical Christianity teaches that there is one God who is three: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. When the disciples met together, they said requirement #1 for the Christian faith is that there be faith in only one God, our God, Jesus Christ. When you put your faith and trust in what He did for you on the cross, you are saved BY FAITH.



Separation from Moral Impurity

Scripture reading Acts 15:20

“But that we write unto them, that they abstain from ...fornication...”

Fornication comes from the Greek word *porneia*. It is a general term talking about any type of moral impurity. God’s plan for human sexuality is absolutely clear in Scripture. *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it”* (Genesis 1:27-28). God’s statement about the man and the woman being together is very simple. *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”* (Genesis 2:24). Jesus added to that. *“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”* (Matthew 19:6). God’s plan is one man, for one woman, for one lifetime. The only legitimate way to break that union is through the death of either spouse. Any violation of God’s plan is by Biblical definition fornication. That would include divorce and remarriage, pre-marital sex, extramarital sex, pornography, homosexuality, bestiality, incest, or self-manipulation. The early church leaders obviously felt that it was absolutely essential that believers stay morally pure. If someone chose to live a life contrary to the biblical moral standard, then it was legitimate reason to not fellowship with them. In the Corinthian church, there was a man who was living in fornication. He was sleeping with his father’s wife. The Apostle Paul found out about this and wrote to them. He instructed them to specifically remove him from the roles of the church and not have fellowship with him. In our culture today moral impurity is widespread. Perversion of every type is justified. Yet, God tells us specifically how to avoid sexual sin in 1 Corinthians 7. He gives specific instruction.

1. If you want to remain single, then don’t touch a woman.
2. If you have a desire to touch, then get married and enjoy your spouse.

the opposite sex?)

Fornication is a devastating sin. Paul tells us, *“he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body”* (1 Corinthians 6:18). Solomon tells us that sexual sin *“destroyeth his own soul”* (Proverbs 6:32). I encourage you as a believer flee from sexual sin and avoid those who are involved with it. Ask God to keep you pure BY FAITH.



Separate from Those That Are Insensitive to Others

Scripture reading Acts 15:20-21

“But that we write unto them, that they abstain from...things strangled... For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.”

Why would the elders and apostles agree with James that New Testament believers that are not Jewish should abstain from eating food that was strangled? I have read many commentaries on the subject and have come to the conclusion that the answer is found in verse 21. The leaders of the church in Jerusalem wanted Christians to be sensitive to the preferences and sensitivity of others. Jewish believers had grown up being taught dietary laws which included not eating meat if the blood had not been drained out. This would be a direct offense to Jewish brothers and sisters in Christ. Some would argue, “Well, that is their problem. They are weak in faith.” However, Paul would argue that we should be willing to limit our liberty in order not to offend. Paul taught *“Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth”* (1 Corinthians 8:1). Consideration for another brother’s preferences is a great expression of the love of Jesus Christ when it came to eating meat that was sacrificed to idols. Paul said there was no problem with it whatsoever, except that it might offend a brother. His conclusion, *“Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend”* (1 Corinthians 8:13). I am saved by grace through faith alone. Nothing can ever change that. I am surrounded by believers of all different backgrounds. I want to be aware of their preferences. I want to be able to minister to their needs. Paul would say, *“I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some”* (1 Corinthians 9:22). There is a huge difference between that and the person who would say in 2021, “I don’t care what you think. Just get over it.”

Consideration for others is a Christian virtue that all believers should cling to BY FAITH.

BY FAITH Devotional

Week 3 – Lesson 6



Believers Should Love Life

Scripture reading Acts 15:20

“But that we write unto them, that they abstain from... blood.”

Leviticus 17:10-11 gives God’s law about the eating of blood. *“And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”* God wants us Christians to have healthy and holy respect for life. The Israelites were forbidden to eat or drink blood because God said, *“the life of the flesh is in the blood”*. Life is precious and God wants His people, Old and New Testament, to love and respect life.

I believe when the apostles gave instruction to New Testament Gentle believers to abstain from blood, He had more in mind than just their dietary laws. Life was cheap under Roman domination. Throughout the history of Israel, children had been sacrificed to idols. This always brought disfavor with God. As believers, we should love life. We should do all we can to protect life from conception to old age. In our culture today, great immortality has brought about the acceptance of abortion. Our self-centered “me” culture justifies euthanasia and the self-destruction of the elderly. For the believer, this cannot be the case. Though we may not in our culture force others to revere life, we must always strive to honor, protect, and advance it for the glory of God. The truth is that the believer is called to share the life of Jesus Christ with all that are around him.

Seven years ago, a doctor came to a young couple and said, “The baby that you are carrying will be born severely disabled. In compassion, I would encourage you to abort the child.” The young couple determined that life was precious and that they would keep the unborn child no matter what the consequences. They had a love for life, because they loved the Lord. Today, I have the privilege watching my seven-year-old grandchild, who was born perfectly healthy, play, sing, and go to church. He is a delight to my life and to all other lives he touches. I encourage you as a believer to cling to life, and have a respect for what God is in control of and do it BY FAITH.