

CP — 9/17/23

## Acts 15:22-35 — “The Jerusalem Letter to the Gentile Believers”

### Sermon Outline

\*\*\*When God is at work, our enemy will be also. (See Acts 4, Acts 5, Acts 7–8, Acts 12–13)

Church at Antioch— Acts 11:19–30

- Acts 13:1–3
- Love for the Word, Love for the Church, and Love for God’s Mission
- This church is the one that is being harassed by false teaching.

### **I. The Letter Recorded (15:22–29)**

- Contents of the letter
- A word of unity (23)
  - “Brothers who are of the Gentiles”
- A word of comfort and clarity (24–25)
  - “troubled you with word” - severely hurt/deep down
  - ***Gal. 1:5–7: “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.”***
  - ***Gal. 5:10: “I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is.”***
    - Here you see the big issue of distorting the Gospel
    - False gospels cause deep turmoil in the heart (can’t achieve or maintain it).
    - False gospels oppose grace.
    - Paul was a compassionate guy and could sympathize with people, but he had no sympathy for people polluting the pure gospel.
    - Galatians is the only letter he wrote that did not start with a warm greeting.
    - Paul could even still give kind words to the Corinthians.
    - John Newton, “*Paul was a read in non-essentials; an iron pillar in essentials*”
- “unsettling your minds” - subverting your minds
  - It’s a military term that speaks of looting villages or wiping them out completely.
  - These false teachers are spiritual robbers.
  - Legalism in essence steals the riches of grace.
    - A group of Gentiles who had become rich in grace, power, and love were not unsettled in their hearts and minds.
    - This is the danger of legalism— it steals the riches of grace.
      - Even for us today, when we operate from legalism, then we are robbing ourselves from experiencing the joys of grace.
      - OT— Do this and be blessed
      - NT — You’re blessed in Christ
      - When we operate in legalism, we reverse the new economy.
- A word of cooperation (25-28)
  - Paul/Barnabas and Judas/Silas
  - The Holy Spirit and us
  - This wasn’t a decision made by just Paul/Barnabas or just the Jerusalem church. The decision was made under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

- A word of wisdom (29)
  - It's important to note that a believer should not remain the same if truly saved.
  - We must separate ourselves from our old ways
  - Abstain from:
    - Sexual immorality — always sinful, just read the Bible
      - “Pornea” - all matters and manners
      - For the Gentile, they had no “written” law on sexual relations or marriages.
      - Sex was a part of their pagan worship but also just a part of their lives.
      - The marriage covenant we see in Scripture wasn't theirs.
        - They may marry a cousin or in-law.
    - Food sacrificed to idols, from blood, and strangled
      - This was about unity here.
      - So we ask the question here, if this a new “law” or “wisdom.”
      - We look through the Scriptures to answer these questions.
      - Obviously, sexual immorality is always sinful.
      - But was eating this food sinful, or was it a matter of unity? (1 Corinthians 8)
      - The question isn't if it is right or wrong, but who does it affect?
      - Limits to Christian Liberty (Questions from John MacArthur)
      - There are areas that are black and white.
      - There are areas that are gray.
      - How do we navigate the not clear areas?
  - “If you keep yourself from these, you will do well.”
    - I think this is individually and in the life of the church community

## **II. The Letter Delivered (30)**

- “having gathered the whole church”
- Imagine the buzz
- They delivered it.

## **III. The Letter Read and Received (31–35)**

- The church at Antioch rejoiced and was encouraged.
- Didn't the letter infringe upon the liberties?
- No way, look at how they responded!
- When the gospel is pure and central, it creates unity.
- Judas and Silas stayed for a time and encouraged the brothers.
- Judas and Silas went sent by Antioch back to Jerusalem. “Gave them the Shalom”
- Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch and taught.

### **Two Take-Home Points of Application:**

- 1. We should never abandon the gospel of grace!**
- 2. We must lovingly preserve the unity of the body!**

### **Small Group Discussion Questions:**

1. How did the Holy Spirit use the Bible passage and sermon to speak to you? What stood out the most?
2. How does legalism rob the riches of grace? Why do people have a hard time embracing the message of grace? Why are we quick to move from trusting in grace to trusting in works?
3. What “Jesus-plus” gospels have you heard taught?
4. Why does James give these four restrictions to the Gentiles? What does this passage teach about one’s conscience? What freedoms might you need to limit to not violate the consciences of others in your circle?
5. What does the passage teach about the essentials and nonessentials of the faith? Discuss the differences.