

THE BOOK OF

ACTS

LIBERTI

CHAPTERS
14-17

THE CHURCH MULTIPLIES

The background is a historical map of the Mediterranean region, showing the coastlines of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. A prominent dashed line represents the Tropic of Capricorn. Various geographical labels are visible, including 'MADAGASCAR', 'S. LAZARUS', 'Cap S. Sebastian', 'R. de Spiritu S.', 'R. de Infantes', 'Cap. de Ananias', 'T. veldun', and 'Land van Bona Hope'. The map is rendered in a light, sepia tone, providing a historical and geographical context for the text.

1. THE PROBLEM: JESUS PLUS ANYTHING

ACTS 15:1-5 ESV

¹ But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." ² And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.

1. THE PROBLEM: JESUS PLUS ANYTHING

ACTS 15:1-5 ESV

³ So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers. ⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. ⁵ But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses."

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2. THE SOLUTION: JESUS PLUS NOTHING

ACTS 15:6-11 ESV

⁶ The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. ⁷ And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

2. THE SOLUTION: JESUS PLUS NOTHING

ACTS 15:6-11 ESV

⁸ And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, ⁹ and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

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"What! Get to heaven on your own strength? Why, you might as well try to climb to the moon on a rope of sand!"

GEORGE WHITEFIELD

2. THE SOLUTION: JESUS PLUS NOTHING

ACTS 15:6-11 ESV

¹¹ But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

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3. THE RESULT: A GOSPEL-CULTURE

ACTS 15:12-32 ESV

¹² And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. ¹³ After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴ Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name.

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3. THE RESULT: A GOSPEL-CULTURE

ACTS 15:12-32 ESV

¹⁵ And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written,

¹⁶ "'After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, ¹⁷ that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things ¹⁸ known from of old.'

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3. THE RESULT: A GOSPEL-CULTURE

ACTS 15:12-32 ESV

¹⁹ Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God,

²⁰ but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood. ²¹ For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues."

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3. THE RESULT: A GOSPEL-CULTURE

ACTS 15:12-32 ESV

²² Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers, ²³ with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings.

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3. THE RESULT: A GOSPEL-CULTURE

ACTS 15:12-32 ESV

²⁴ Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, ²⁵ it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth.

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3. THE RESULT: A GOSPEL-CULTURE

ACTS 15:12-32 ESV

²⁸ For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: ²⁹ that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell." ³⁰ So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. ³¹ **And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.**

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RESULT 1: WE COMMIT TO ELIMINATING ANY OBSTACLES TO THE GOSPEL

ACTS 15:19 ESV

"We should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God."

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RESULT 2: WE COMMIT TO USING OUR FREEDOM IN CHRIST TO SERVE ONE ANOTHER

ACTS 15:20 ESV

"but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood.

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THE BEAUTY OF A GOSPEL CULTURE

GALATIANS 5:1, 13-14

¹ For freedom, Christ set us free. Stand firm then and don't submit again to a yoke of slavery.

¹³ For you were called to be free, brothers and sisters; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement: Love your neighbor as yourself.

We know the gospel has moved from our heads to our hearts, when beauty shows up in the way we treat one another.

“What binds us together is not common education, common race, common income levels, common politics, common nationality, common accents, common jobs, or anything of the sort. Christians come together, not because they form a natural collocation, but because they have been saved by Jesus Christ and owe him a common allegiance.

In the light of this common allegiance, in light of the fact that they have all been loved by Jesus himself, they commit themselves to doing what he says – and he commands them to love one another. **In this light, they are a band of natural enemies who love one another for Jesus' sake."**

D.A CARSON