

How Shall We Be Saved?

Acts chapter 15 is one of the most critical chapters in all of the Bible because it deals with the doctrine of salvation.

The question that we want to ask today is the same question they asked in Acts 15: **How shall we be saved?**

The question was asked in Antioch. The question was examined in Jerusalem, and the question was answered by Peter. That's what we find in Acts 15, verses 1 through 11. **3 parts.**

Part #1 - The question was asked in Antioch. **15:1-3**

15 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."

All of a sudden, the church in Antioch was worried. Are these men right? Was Paul wrong? Is our faith in Jesus not enough? How does God save?

² And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them,

Paul and Barnabas fought back. Jude 3 - *...contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.*

...Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. 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.

The Phoenician and Samaritan churches had never been taught that circumcision was necessary for salvation. Peter was known to travel back and forth in these areas.

Part #2 - The question was examined in Jerusalem.
15:4-6

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.

What an exciting time! Barnabas and Paul were back in town! They declared all that God had done with them. It wasn't their work. It was God's.

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."

1) Believe on Jesus. 2) Be circumcised. 3) Keep the Law of Moses. 3 required steps.

Romans 11:6 - ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. God's grace is not on the basis of works. The works of men do not result in the grace of God.

Let's ask some questions:

1. Is faith in Christ a work of man? No. *Eph. 2:8 - For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God.*

2. Is circumcision a work of man? Yes. Eph. 2:11 - *circumcision, which is performed in the flesh by human hands.*
3. Is keeping the law a work of man? Yes. *Romans 3:28 - For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.*
4. If those three required steps were truly required of God to secure salvation, is that salvation by grace? No. It couldn't be. If it includes works, it can no longer be of grace. *Romans 11:6*

The entire doctrine of salvation was on the line. The apostles had to come face to face with this. Is salvation by grace? Or Works? Because it cannot be both.

Why can't it be both? Why can't salvation be by the grace of God, and by the works of men? So that you can't take any credit for it. *Ephesians 2:9 - not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

6 The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter.

Who were those men? Most of the writers of the New Testament.

- We know for sure Peter (15:7), James - the Lord's brother (15:13), and Paul (15:12).
- We can assume that Matthew, John, Mark, and Jude were there.
- There is a slim chance Luke was there too.

Part #3 - The question was answered by Peter. **15:7-11**

Peter answered the question in 3 ways.

(Way #1) - Peter remembered God's actions. **15:7-9**

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. 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.

1. God chose to send Peter to preach the gospel so they would hear the word and believe.
2. God knew their hearts.
3. God gave them the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:43-48).

4. God made no distinction between Jew and Gentile.
5. God cleansed their hearts by faith.

(Way #2) - Peter Questioned the questioners. 15:10

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?

Why are you putting God to the test? God gave His Holy Spirit to Cornelious apart from the law. Are you telling God He made the wrong choice?

Jesus said, *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.. my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

Peter said the yoke of the Law is hard and heavy, and none of us nor our fathers have been able to bear it.

Jesus said the entire law of God can all be broken down into two parts. *Matthew 22:37 - “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love*

your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and Prophets.”

Peter was right. Neither our fathers nor we can bear God's law. The standard is too high.

Way #3 - Peter delivered the verdict. 15:11

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

How shall we be saved, Peter? Through the grace of the Lord Jesus.

What did those gentiles do? They heard the word of the gospel and believed. By faith in Jesus Christ, God gave them His Holy Spirit and God cleansed their hearts.

How was Peter saved? Just as they were. He heard the word of the gospel and believed. By faith in Jesus Christ, God gave Peter His Holy Spirit and God cleansed his heart.

How shall you be saved?

It doesn't matter how religious you are. It doesn't matter how sinful you are. Everyone who will be saved will be saved the same way: through the grace of Jesus, by faith in Him.

FAITH PLUS NOTHING EQUALS SALVATION.