

The Life Of Paul - Week 13

Acts 15:1–21

September 27, 2026

The gospel plus anything is no longer the gospel. Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus—not by adding rules, rituals, traditions, or personal preferences. At the same time, Christian maturity means learning to hold our preferences loosely so that **love and unity** can guide how we live together.

1. THE GOSPEL IS JESUS + NOTHING - Some believers were teaching that Gentiles had to be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses in order to be saved. They were adding a requirement to faith in Jesus. This created a serious question for the early church: **What is required for salvation?** The Jerusalem Council ultimately defended the truth that salvation is a gift of God's grace.

Acts 15:11 — “We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved.”

Remember: We do not become accepted by God because we are “good enough.” We are accepted because of what Jesus has done.

2. GUARD AGAINST “FAITH + SOMETHING ELSE” The temptation to add requirements to the gospel still exists today. We can subtly believe that we must be better, have the right background, follow certain traditions, or meet certain expectations before we truly belong.

Jeremiah 17:9 reminds us that our hearts are not always a reliable guide to truth.

Ask: Am I trusting completely in Jesus, or am I adding something else to the gospel?

3. PROTECT UNITY WITHOUT COMPROMISING TRUTH - The Jerusalem Council had to distinguish between what was **essential to the gospel** and what was **cultural preference**.

Acts 15:19 James said: “We should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.”

The goal was not to make everyone exactly alike. The goal was to help Jewish and Gentile believers live together as one body while protecting the truth of the gospel.

Key principle: **Never compromise the gospel to create unity, but be willing to compromise personal preferences to protect unity.**

4. FREEDOM SHOULD BE GUIDED BY LOVE - Paul teaches that having freedom does not mean we must always exercise that freedom.

1 Corinthians 10:23 — “I have the right to do anything—but not everything is beneficial.” Christian maturity asks more than “**Can I?**” It also asks “**Should I?**” and “**Will this help or hurt someone else?**” A personal conviction becomes a condition when we expect everyone else to believe or practice it exactly as we do.

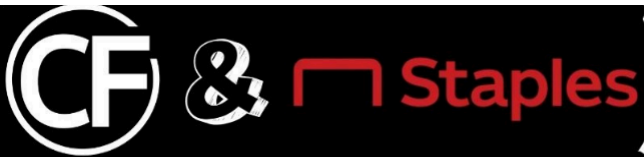
5. WHAT DOES GOSPEL MATURITY LOOK LIKE? - The believers in Acts 15 were willing to give up preferences for the sake of one another. **Christian maturity is not just knowing what you are free to do—it is knowing what you are free to give up.** Unity does not mean everyone has the same preferences. It means **Christ matters more than our preferences.**

THIS WEEK: PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- **Examine your heart:** Is there anything you are adding to the gospel of grace?
- **Hold your preferences loosely:** Can you disagree with someone without making the disagreement a barrier to fellowship?
- **Choose love:** Before exercising freedom, ask whether it is helpful and loving.
- **Protect unity:** Look for one opportunity this week to put someone else's needs ahead of your own preference.

REMEMBER:

“We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.” — Acts 15:11
Grace saves us. Christ unites us. Love guides how we live together.



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TODAY

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27
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☎ 931-707-1884

✉ info@cumberlandfellowshipio.com

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