

## A. SERMON SLIDES

Clarifying the Gospel  
Acts 15:1-11, 22-29

Acts 15:1-5 (ESV)

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.” 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. 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. 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. 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.”

Acts 15:6-11 (ESV)

The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. 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. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. 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? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

Acts 15:22-29 (ESV)

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, 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. 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, 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, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: 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.”

## B. GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Read all of Acts 15. Talk about anything you see, or ask questions of the text to clarify.
2. The question in this moment in the church is circumcision. Some say it is essential, and some say that it is not. They felt like they needed to work that out. So, what happens today when there are disagreements about the essentials of the faith? How do we usually decide on what to do?
3. You may want to go through the Gospel with one another. What is the "good news?" And what would one need to know in order for the Gospel to be "good news?" (What is the truth of the bad news?) What would one need to believe about the Bible so that we could even know for certain what the "good news" is?
4. Why is it important to make sure that the Gospel remains liberated from anything else that could be added to it?
5. How did these early Christians find Holy Spirit guidance? How were they able to understand the "truth" in these matters? And again, how do most try to find it today?
6. If the Gospel is free, how do we process the advice of the Jewish leaders to still not do a few things. Were they saying these things were now to be added to the Gospel?
7. Prayer and praise