

Living in the Promises of Jesus

Acts 15

Lesson 11

OBSERVATION: Read Acts 15

1. After reading through these verses, what would you say to someone if they asked you what they are about?
2. Key words help us to better understand the verses. We have listed below a group of key words. Mark each one in a distinctive way

Key Words: God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, all references to Paul, Barnabas, and believe/saved/gospel

DIVISION OVER CIRCUMSCISION: Read Acts 15:1-5

1. People adding to God's requirements for salvation have been a problem for thousands of years. What was the *requirement* taught by certain men who came down from Judea?
 - a. Underline the phrase *you cannot be saved* in your answer above. Record Paul's words to the Galatians in Galatians 1:9.
 - 1.) Why is it so important not to add or detract from the gospel?
2. What are the components of the gospel? (What must one do to be saved?) See Romans 10:9-10
 - a. What are some other requirements some people add to the gospel?
 - b. What are some ways people take away from the gospel/state people can be saved by less than what the gospel requires?

3. According to Acts 15:2, what was the response of Paul and Barnabas?

4. What did they decide to do to resolve the dissension? Acts 15:2,3
 - a. They passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, two non-Jewish regions. What did they describe/declare to the people in these regions?

 - b. What was the result?

5. Using Acts 15:4,5, list those who received Paul and Barnabas and those who did not.
 - a. Paul too, had been a Pharisee. Read Philippians 3:5-8 and share what Paul had learned to value.

THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM CONSIDERS THE MATTER: Read Acts 15:6-21

1. Peter rose up and recounted to them his experience at the home of Cornelius as recorded in Acts 10:44-48. What happened?
 - a. Notice the words of Acts 15:9. Rather than circumcision or any requirement of the law, what did God look to in order to purify their hearts?

2. Acts 15:10 begins with the term of conclusion, *therefore*. What did Peter conclude?
 - a. Define the word bondage.
 - b. Reflect upon the phrase, *which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear*. In what ways is the law of Moses "unbearable"?
 - c. Describe the freedom you experienced when you realized that Jesus had fulfilled the requirements of the law for you and that He paid the price for you not being able to bear it.
3. Acts 15:11 begins with the contrasting word, *but*. Rather than looking to the law of Moses to be saved, what does this verse teach us?
 - a. What does Ephesians 2:8,9 say that confirms this?
4. Paul and Barnabas then took the platform and declared how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. What did they share with the church in Antioch upon returning from their first missionary journey? Acts 14:27
5. James arose and quoted Amos 9:11,12. What truth had been declared about the Gentiles long before this day?

6. James concluded that *we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God*. List the four things believing Gentiles were to abstain from.

- 1)

- 2)

- 3)

- 4)

Note: It is important that we understand that these were not requirements for salvation. Peter, Paul and Barnabas had clearly established that. Rather, these were ceremonial laws addressed in Leviticus 17,18 which the Gentiles were being asked to honor, presumably to respect the Jews

7. James reminded the Jews in Acts 15:21, that although they had been exposed to the ceremonial laws of Moses through the teaching they received in the synagogues, the Gentiles had not. Why can it be important to honor the customs of another culture?

THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM MAKES A DETERMINATION: Acts 15:22-35

1. The council determined to send Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch with a letter. How would you describe the tone of the letter?
 - a. Share some components of the letter that reveal the wisdom of those who wrote it.

2. Look at verse 28. Who did they say was in agreement with them?
 - a. How can we know if the Holy Spirit agrees with decisions we are making?

3. According to verse 28, what did they not want to do?
 - a. What was the goal of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:4?
 - b. In contrast, how does Jesus describe His burden in Matthew 11:30?
 - c. Explain, as you would to a new believer, how Jesus' burdens are not heavy.
4. *If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well* Acts 15:29. There are many things we obey that are not requirements, but are the right thing to do. How do you personally determine the right thing to do, when it is not specifically addressed in the Bible?
5. Acts 15:31 reports that the people, when they had read the letter, they rejoiced over its encouragement. What do you think was encouraging about the letter?

DIVISION OVER JOHN MARK: Read Acts 15:36-41

1. After some days (Acts 15:36) Paul told Barnabas that he wanted to go back and visit the brethren in every city where they had preached the word of the Lord. Why did he want to do this?
 - a. What does this say to you about Paul's care for the people?
2. Using verses 37 and 38, describe the disagreement that arose between Paul and Barnabas.

- a. What was the result of this contention?
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3. What do we learn from the fact that Paul and Barnabas had such a heated exchange?
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4. John called Mark will again minister with Paul. Record these instances from:
 - Colossians 4:10
 - 2 Timothy 4:11
 - Philemon 1:246

What do these teach us about being used by God after we have failed?

REVIEW: Read Acts 15

1. How does Acts 15 remind us to be careful of what we require of new believers?

2. What lessons did you learn from this chapter that you can apply when there is dissension between you and someone else?

3. Peter shared how the Holy Spirit confirmed the belief of the Gentiles at the home of Cornelius. Paul and Barnabas shared how the Lord confirmed His work amongst the Gentiles through miracles and wonders. James shared the desire of the Lord for the Gentiles by quoting His Word. Why is God's word always the final authority?