



◆ INTRODUCTION

In Acts 15, the church confronts a dangerous demand: trust Jesus, then meet another condition before God will accept you. PT examines Catholic teachings about authority, salvation, sacrifice, and access to God while challenging every believer to ask what we are really trusting. Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient; His grace cannot be purchased. We honor people while testing beliefs against Scripture, lay down the shame we keep carrying, and obey Christ because we belong to Him—not to earn our way in.

◆ KEY SCRIPTURES

- **Acts 15:1–41** — The Jerusalem council rejects circumcision as a condition of salvation, affirming that Jews and Gentiles are saved through Jesus' grace. Its letter calls believers away from idolatry, sexual immorality, blood, and strangled meat; the church rejoices and is strengthened. The chapter ends with Paul and Barnabas separating over John Mark: Barnabas travels with Mark, while Paul takes Silas to strengthen churches.
- **Galatians 1:8–9** — No messenger, however impressive, has authority to replace the Gospel already received.
- **Romans 3:23–28; 4:5** — All have sinned. God justifies through faith in Christ, not works; righteousness is received, not earned.
- **Ephesians 2:8–10** — Salvation is God's gift through faith. Good works follow salvation; they do not purchase it.
- **Hebrews 10:11–14** — Jesus offered one sufficient sacrifice for sins and sat down; His people continue being sanctified.
- **1 Timothy 2:5** — Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and humanity.
- **Hebrews 4:14–16** — Our sinless, sympathetic High Priest invites us to approach God confidently for mercy and help.
- **1 John 1:9; James 5:16** — God forgives and cleanses confessed sin; believers also confess to one another and pray for one another.

◆ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Speak from your own experience; no one needs to name others or disclose sensitive details.

1. Before you give the church answer: what are you counting on to make you right with God—Jesus, your religious record, or being better than somebody else? What does your reaction after you fail reveal about what you actually trust? (*Romans 3:23–28; 4:5*)
2. For former Catholics: what did you believe you had to do to be accepted by God? Where did that leave you confident—or afraid? Have you changed what you trust, or just where you attend? (*Acts 15:10–11*)
3. PT said, "You should never have to close your Bible to keep agreeing with your pastor." Former Catholics, how did church authority and family loyalty affect what you felt free to question? For everyone: which belief would you struggle to defend with an open Bible? (*Galatians 1:8–9*)

4. For former Catholics: how did confession to a priest or asking Mary and the saints to pray for you shape your relationship with Jesus? What has changed since leaving? For everyone: what makes you hesitate to bring your worst failure directly to Him? (*1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:14–16*)
5. PT said, “Jesus did not leave a BALANCE for your shame to pay.” Where are you confusing genuine repentance with punishing yourself? What would trusting His finished sacrifice change this week? (*Hebrews 10:11–14*)
6. What sin have you renamed a weakness, a personality trait, or “just how I am” so you can keep it? What would repentance require you to stop, confess, or repair—not someday, but this week? (*1 John 1:9; James 5:16*)
7. Where have you made your preferences feel like God’s requirements—how someone dresses, worships, or fits your church culture? Who have you kept at arm’s length because they did not meet your standards? (*Acts 15:19–20*)
8. Has this sermon made you more grateful for Jesus—or just more convinced your church is right? What will you say to Catholic family or friends that tells the truth without treating them like the enemy?

◆ PASTOR’S BEST QUOTES

- “You can sit in a church that preaches FREEDOM and still go home wearing CHAINS.”
- “Peter carried the KEYS; Jesus remained the DOOR. Respect the servant without putting your salvation in the servant’s HANDS.”
- “Stop handing God a RESUME when He is offering you MERCY.”
- “Don’t mistake the fruit of salvation for the price of salvation.”
- “Grace removes the burden of earning God’s welcome; it doesn’t remove the call to obey.”

◆ ACTION PROMPTS

- **TEST WHAT YOU TRUST:** Write one belief about God’s acceptance that you inherited but have never examined. Read Acts 15 and Ephesians 2:8–10; write what those passages affirm or challenge. Talk it through with a trusted believer this week.
- **TAKE IT TO JESUS—THEN TAKE THE NEXT STEP:** Confess to Jesus what you have been hiding or carrying. Within 48 hours, take one concrete step: apologize, make restitution, seek help, or ask for prayer. Choose a trusted person to check on your follow-through this week.

◆ CLOSING PRAYER

Pray together, making this personal:

Father, we confess that we have trusted our performance, protected our traditions, and sometimes hidden behind our church identity. Bring every belief under Your Word. Thank You that Jesus’ sacrifice is sufficient and that we can come to You through Him. Teach us to receive mercy instead of trying to earn it.

Give us courage to confess sin, repair what we have damaged, and take the next obedient step. Free us from shame without letting us make excuses. Help us love Catholic family and friends and speak truth without pride. Let our changed lives show that grace is not permission to stay the same. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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