

The Grace You Must Embrace

Have you ever heard someone communicate that salvation is only possible if you believe in Jesus . . . AND . . . do something more? Refrain from this activity; practice that one. Clean up your act. Engage a social issue the way they do. Vote like they do. The list goes on. Today's passage presents just such a situation in the life of the early church. Jewish believers from Judea come to Antioch insisting that unless the Gentile believers are circumcised, they cannot be saved. That is the question. What is necessary for salvation? In response to this conflict the church gathers for what has become known as the Jerusalem Council. This council settles the issue. Jesus is enough. Truly, grace is what you must embrace.

Read Acts 15:1-35

1. What situation is the cause of the council that gathers in Jerusalem? How would you summarize the issue?
2. The text tells us that Paul and Barnabas respond strongly against the men who came from Judea insisting on circumcision (v. 2). What insight does Paul's letter to the Galatians give us as to why they would respond so strongly (see Gal. 2:16-21; 3:5, 10-14)?
3. What argument does Peter make against the Pharisees' insistence that Gentiles follow the Law (vv. 7-11)?
4. How does James speak to the issue from a biblical perspective (vv. 15-18)?
5. Ultimately, what is asked of the Gentile believers? Why were these things asked of them after determining that Gentiles do not need to follow the Law?

6. As you consider how the church addressed this theological controversy of what Gentiles must do to be saved, how would you summarize their process of discerning God's will?

7. As you think about the flow of church history, why was this an important event in the life of the church?

Sam said:

Since ***we believe that we are saved by grace, and grace alone*** then ***we need to accept this gift***. We need to embrace this grace by which we are saved. We need to treasure what Christ has done for us. And we should live our lives in response to that grace.

8. Are there any ways in which you need to repent of a lack of grace for yourself? Or for others? Is there anything you are adding to the gospel of grace for yourself or others?

9. What is your main take away from this study?