



Gateway To Life Bible Studies

"And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (Acts 20:32)

LESSON 7

Please read Acts 15. *This is one of the most important chapters in the development of the church. A wrong decision at the council in Jerusalem would have been devastating to Christianity.*

1. Who brought in confusing teachings concerning law and grace? 15:1
2. Who do you suppose they might have been by the description in 15:5?
3. Who instantly and very sharply resisted their teaching? 15:2
4. What would be the result if circumcision were made necessary to salvation? Galatians 5:3
5. What is contradicted if we make any part of the law essential to salvation? Romans 3:21-22 (confirm: Ephesians 2:8-9)
6. What mystery did Paul understand? Ephesians 3:3-6
7. What occurred when the Gentiles received Jesus Christ? Acts 15:8
8. What were these mistaken teachers doing by dictating their terms of salvation? 15:10
9. What is the "good news" for both Jew and Gentile? 15:11

10. How does the Bible show us, quite graphically, that the law keeping is powerless to save?
Galatians 2:21
11. James summarized God's program from what Peter had said. What is God's program? 15:14
12. God's program (so to speak) will end. By reading Romans 11:25, when will the program be ended.
13. What was the proposed settlement of the dispute at Antioch? Acts 15:22-23
14. Of whose guidance were they sure of in this church council? 15:28
15. How were they sure that the Holy Spirit was pleased with this decision? 15:15-17
16. The Bible clearly establishes that salvation is through faith and by grace. What surprises you about the letter that went to Antioch? 15:20, 29

Regarding the first three, we need to remember that for centuries Jews had been instructed concerning the ceremonial and dietary laws to be completely scrupulous about eating that which was clean as opposed to that which was unclean. This is an example of a story whereby we need to inform our minds by that which is clearly taught in God's Word. When you read Romans 14 you will soon learn that Paul viewed these things in ways that were not intrinsically evil. Paul's concern in Romans 14 (and I would contend his concern here) is that sensitive weaker¹ brothers are not unduly offended.

*In the New Testament there is never any lax of God's standards of sexual morality. Later Paul writes, "Fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, **let it not even be named among you**, as is fitting for saints" (Ephesians 5:3).*

What we need to take from this is not list of prerequisites to be saved; but a lesson that as Christians we should not unduly offend our weaker brothers and sisters; and salvation by grace through faith is not a license to sin.

17. What painful incident occurred just prior to Paul's missionary journey? 15:39

Much speculation has been done over the nature of this division; however, it is presented by Luke in a matter-of-fact tone. No one can say for sure why Paul didn't want to take Mark. The new teams evidently were both very effective. Barnabas was able to recover and rebuild the life of Mark whom Paul later referred to as one whom he appreciated (cf. Colossians 4:10; 2Timothy 4:11).

18. Where did Barnabas and Mark go to minister? 15:39

19. Where did Paul and Silas go to minister? 15:41

20. What was Paul's task as he left on this second missionary journey? 15:41

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

#1. As you read through Acts 15, please note the things that were happening within the lives of believers that, in your opinion, were building up and maturing the group of believers in this time of history. The first one is given as an example:

1.	There was recognition and discernment applied to teaching	15:1-2
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

This chapter is focused primarily on what God was doing in the churches and lives of the believers.

#2. Share with your group one area of personal growth that you see in Question #1 that you long to see expressed better in your life.

#3. Based upon the entire history recorded in Acts 15, what are some of the essential elements that contribute to the expansion of the Church?

#4. Please take time to pray for one another, for both personal aspirations as noted in #3 and for our Church that the elements you noted in #4 may be realized by God's grace and power.

ⁱ Those who are weak in the faith were Christians who did not have full understanding that salvation is the free gift of God and that the believer faces no condemnation whatever because of the atonement of Christ. Paul enjoyed his Christian liberty to the fullest and was totally emancipated from foolish superstitions and unbiblical taboos. Some of the Romans, however, were yet clinging to these taboos for they did not fully accept the doctrine of justification by faith alone. In relation to this, Paul addresses both those living freely in Christ and those in Christ who are still bound by fleshly legalism. The strong who had internalized Bible doctrine, were to receive the weak, those who did not fully rest in the grace of God. But they were not to argue with them over secondary points of difference. (*KJV Bible commentary*. 1997, c1994 (electronic ed.) (2265). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.)

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