

Part 14 – July 12, 2009

"The Spirit, the Kingdom, and the Free Gospel of Jesus Christ"

Acts 15:1-35

Outline of the Text

- I. The Controversy (v. 1-4)**
 - a. The doctrinal claim & dispute (v. 1-2)
 - b. Paul & Barnabas sent to Jerusalem (v. 2)
 - c. Spreading testimony along the way (v. 3-4)
- II. The Consultation (v. 5-18)**
 - a. Christian Pharisees make their case (v. 5)
 - b. Apostolic response (v. 6-18)
 - i. Peter (v. 6-11)*
 - 1. God's sovereign decision to save Gentiles (v. 7)
 - 2. Testimony of the Holy Spirit (v. 8)
 - 3. Salvation & cleansing by grace through faith (v. 9-11)
 - ii. Barnabas & Paul (v. 12)*
 - iii. James (v. 13-18)*
 - 1. God is making a people for His name (v. 14)
 - 2. This is the testimony of Scripture [Amos 9:11-12] (v. 15)
- III. The Conclusion (v. 19-35)**
 - a. Do not trouble the Gentiles (v. 19)
 - b. Limited regulations (v. 20)
 - i. Distinctiveness from the world*
 - 1. Abstain from idols
 - 2. Abstain from sexual immorality
 - ii. Priority of Christian fellowship*
 - 1. Avoid strangled meat
 - 2. Avoid blood
 - c. Letter sent
 - i. Testimony of two witnesses [Deut. 19:15] (v. 22)*
 - ii. Encouragement from the Holy Spirit (v. 32)*
 - iii. Teaching & preaching the Word (v. 35)*

Jesus Christ and His Gospel of Grace

- Jesus plus anything equals zero

Romans 11:6

- An unbearable yoke (v. 10)

"Circumcision, if it is observed as part of the law, requires that all the law be observed for salvation"
-**Darrel Bock**, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on Acts*, 497

Galatians 5:2

"Those who tie people's salvation to the works of the law leave them without anything good to hope for; they throw the whole world to destruction if it can obtain salvation only by keeping the law"
-**John Calvin**, *Commentary on Acts*, 256

- The complete Savior (v. 9-11)

The Spirit and the Age of Liberty

In this text, the Spirit is at work in at least three ways:

- *Testimony at the conversion of the Gentiles (v. 8)*
- *Guidance during the Jerusalem council (v. 28)*
- *Presence in the application of truth (v. 32)*

The Spirit is securing the freedom of the Gospel

"The Spirit does not simply inaugurate the new age and disappear; rather, he *characterizes* the new age"
-**D.A. Carson**, *Showing the Spirit*, 151

The Mark of the Spirit on this Age

2 Corinthians 3:6-17

"The first and general work of the Holy Spirit is to bring to mind the words and promises of Christ [the Gospel]. ...It is stupid to rely on our natural abilities to remember the promises of Christ. But when the Comforter undertakes the work, then all is well"
-**John Owen**, *Communion with the Triune God*, 177-178

The New Kingdom and Good News for All Nations

- Harmonizing with the prophets (v. 14-15)

Isaiah 11:10

Zechariah 2:11

- Rebuilding the Ruins (v.16-18)

Amos 9:11-12

"James, like all early Christians, believed as a first principle that [the restoration of Israel] happened through Jesus being established as Messiah by his resurrection. ...Precisely because God has fulfilled his covenant with Israel in sending Jesus as Messiah, the covenant family is now thrown open to all, without distinction"

-**N.T. Wright**, *Acts for Everyone*, 41-45

- The cosmic renewal project

1 Peter 2:4-5; 9-10