

# The Law of Grace

1. The Pharisees in verse 5 believed that it was necessary for Gentile believers to keep the Law of Moses. They probably believed this because God had commanded that foreigners in Israel be circumcised (Gen. 17:10-14).

- a) Was there anything else that might have influenced their thinking?
- b) How often does tradition influence your thinking?

2. Some people believe that salvation was by works in the Old Testament and now that Jesus has come and died for our sins salvation is by Grace.

- a) Was salvation by works in the Old Testament?
- b) Read Genesis 15:6 what does it say about Abram?
- c) Was this before or after circumcision (Gen. 17:10; 24)?

*[see Rom. 4:20-22; Gal. 3:6-9 for further reference]*

3. Acts 15 contains one of the first major doctrinal crises of the early Church.

- a) What resources did the early church draw on to answer this doctrinal question?
- b) Do we have those same resources today?
- c) Read Ephesians 4:11-14. Did the church at Antioch do the right thing by sending Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem with their question?

4. On the surface, the statement from verse 1 and the letter from the Jerusalem council could both be labeled “legalism.” If you look closely, it is not hard to see how they are different. In verse 1, circumcision is added as a prerequisite for salvation, while the Jerusalem council’s letter addressed post-salvation fellowship and personal testimony issues (sexual immorality, idolatry and Jewish dietary considerations).

- a) How can a believer discern between rules that are from God and those that are merely cultural or human-made?

5. Some Bible teachers agree with Paul in his disagreement with Barnabas, citing as proof no future reference to Barnabas’ name in the Book of Acts and the church’s commissioning of them for missionary service (Acts 15:40). Others say that Barnabas was simply being merciful to John Mark, his cousin (Col. 4:10), who made a single mistake during a difficult situation (Acts 4:36; 11:22-24).

- a) What additional proof does the Bible offer to show that Barnabas’ ministry of encouragement was especially effective in John Mark’s life (II Tim. 4:9-11)?
- b) Take a moment to think about a person (Christian or non-Christian) whom God might want you to encourage. List some specific things you could do to encourage this individual.

<sup>1</sup>And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” <sup>2</sup>Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.

<sup>3</sup>So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. <sup>4</sup>And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. <sup>5</sup>But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”

<sup>6</sup>Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. <sup>7</sup>And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: “Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. <sup>8</sup>So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, <sup>9</sup>and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. <sup>10</sup>Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? <sup>11</sup>But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.”

<sup>12</sup>Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.

<sup>13</sup>And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, “Men and brethren, listen to me: <sup>14</sup>Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. <sup>15</sup>And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:

<sup>16</sup>“After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up;

<sup>17</sup>So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the LORD who does all these things.”

<sup>18</sup>Known to God from eternity are all His works. <sup>19</sup>Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, <sup>20</sup>but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. <sup>21</sup>For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

<sup>22</sup>Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

<sup>23</sup>They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings.

<sup>24</sup>Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law”—to whom we gave no such commandment—<sup>25</sup>it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, <sup>26</sup>men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>27</sup>We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. <sup>28</sup>For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: <sup>29</sup>that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

<sup>30</sup>So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. <sup>31</sup>When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement.

# Read: Acts 13:1-12

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**Monday**

v. 1 — Two spiritual gifts are mentioned here; what are they? Which of these five names do you recognize? Also look at Acts 11:28[a] and 21:10[b]. Was the spiritual gift of prophecy still operational at this time? Do you know your own spiritual gift? Can someone look at your life and say, "They have the gift of \_\_\_\_\_ and they use it!"

**Tuesday**

v. 2 — Which two spiritual disciplines were evidenced in the lives of these believers? Do you know what each one refers to? Are these two disciplines a regular part of your life? What was the result of these men seeking the Lord?

**Wednesday**

v. 3-5 — Which two men did God set apart for a specific assignment? How long did it take them to begin serving Him in the position He had called them to? Consider: how long does it take me to respond to the Holy Spirit when He works in my life or leads me to serve in a specific way?

**Thursday**

v. 6-8 — Who desired to hear the Word in these verses? Who was trying to turn someone from true faith in Christ? Do you promote or discourage the Gospel going forward via your words and actions?

**Friday**

v. 9,10 — Who boldly addressed one who was standing in the way of someone else hearing the Word? Note the one condition the first man fulfilled before he addressed the second man (he was \_\_\_\_\_ with the \_\_\_\_\_). How important is this in our attempts to share the Word and address those who oppose us?

**Saturday**

v. 11,12 — Because God was in this scenario, what two miracles took place in these verses? The miracle of salvation still occurs today. Are you spiritually growing and open to sharing the Gospel with those around you?

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