

Acts 15:1-29

The ONE Thing The C-hurch MUST Get Right

Dissension in the C-hurch v1-5

**Self-Appointed Spiritual Fruit Inspectors Rain on Paul's Gospel Parade
By Contradicting the Truth That Salvation by Grace through Faith Alone**

Their Logical But Completely Wrong Theological Premise:

1: Jews Can Believe in Jesus the Jewish Messiah and Receive the Gift of E-Life

2a: Gentiles Must Become Jews 2b: Only Then Can They Receive the Gift of E-Life

IOWs: Gentiles Must Become Jews...Before They Can Become Christians!?!

Discussion among the Leaders of the C-hurch v6-18

Peter, Paul, Barnabas, James All Stand Up for Salvation Thru Faith Alone

Peter v6-11

Reminds the Group of His Evangelistic Ministry to Cornelius in Caesarea

IOWs: What the Holy Spirit Had Done in Acts 10-11

Paul/Barnabas v12

Reminds the Group of Their Evangelistic Ministry in Antioch of Syria, on the Island of Cyprus, and the Cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe

IOWs: What the Holy Spirit Had Done in Acts 12-14

James v13-18

Reminds the Group that the Old Testament Anticipates Gentiles Being Saved as Gentiles (Through Faith in the Messiah/Savior)

IOWs: What the Holy Spirit Had Declared in the Hebrew Bible (Amos 9:11-12)

Important: James (the Human Author of the Epistle of James) Agrees 100% with Peter, Paul, Barnabas That in Fact Salvation is Thru Faith Alone in Christ Alone

Big Question: Are Paul and James Allies or Enemies?

Today Some on the Far Left Theologically Say

Paul and James Have Different Gospels (Paul/Grace and James/Merit)

Today Some on the Far Right Theologically Say

James 2 Proves that Saving Faith is a Commitment to Obey/Do Good Works In Order to Receive Eternal Salvation

What Should We Think?

The “Problem” Exists Only in the Minds of Certain People! In Fact, Acts 15 Makes It Clear that Paul and James Had the SAME Concept of Eternal Salvation by God’s Grace through Faith in Jesus Christ.

The Key is For Us to Contextually Correlate Key Statements of Paul and of James
Romans 4:3/Galatians 3:6

Paul says Abraham was justified by faith

James 2:21

James says Abraham was justified by works

Who is Right...Paul or James?

Both are correct and seeing this is as easy as realizing that Genesis 15 took place years BEFORE the events of Genesis 22. Thus Paul and James are dealing with two different types of “justification!” Hold on Bible-Breath!?! What does that mean?

1: In Genesis 15 Abraham was justified before God (cited in Romans 4/Gal 3)

BY FAITH (not by and distinct from works)

Invisible...God Sees It But Man Can’t

.....**30-40 YEARS LATER**.....

2: In Genesis 22 Abraham was justified before people (cited in James 2)

BY WORKS (as the visible fruit/effect of his faith as a mature believer)

Visible...Man Can See (While Sees the Work and the Heart/Faith Behind It)

Decision by the Leaders of the C-hurch v19-29
Confirms the Transcendent Truth of Christianity: Because of the Grace of
God and the Work of Christ Salvation is Thru Faith Alone in Christ Alone
Or as Francis Schaeffer put it “Faith Alone in Christ Plus Nothing”

Take This To Heart

The truth that Gentiles are in fact saved from the penalty of sin/given the gift of everlasting life through faith in Christ is fully affirmed by the Jerusalem Council.

IOW: Gentiles have no need to submit to OT rituals and/or to live under the Mosaic Law (before or after they trust in Christ and are given the gift of E-Life).

However the Council DID ask Gentile converts to avoid several lifestyle areas that would have so turned off Jewish believers that fellowship with them would have been essentially impossible. The lesson for us: truly spiritual believers make it a point to avoid needlessly offending other Christians by limiting certain behaviors/actions in agape love.

The Bottom Line

The grace of God is not and cannot be earned or deserved. Good works are the fruit/effect of salvation, but they are not the root/cause of salvation. Eph 2:8-10 “I do not nullify the grace of God for if righteousness could be earned by the Law (or any other set of rules/regulations) then Christ died needlessly!” Galatians 2:20