

“FAITH ALONE IN CHRIST ALONE”
ACTS 15:1-35
NOVEMBER 9, 2008

INTRO

MESSAGE

- ◆ Some Jewish believers say that salvation is by faith plus law-keeping. (1-5)
 - A growing church will have some spiritually immature, doctrinally confused, vocal Christians. (1-2)
 - Godly leaders will respond appropriately to correct any perceived error. (3-5)

- ◆ The Jerusalem Council reaffirms that salvation is by faith alone. (6-19)
 - The Apostle Peter testifies to both the Word and the work of God in saving Gentiles by faith alone. (6-11; see Acts 10:1-11:18)
 - The Apostle Paul and Barnabas testify to the miraculous work of God in saving Gentiles by faith alone. (12; see 13:1-14:28)
 - James and the Jerusalem Church determine not to hinder God’s work among the Gentiles by adding anything to the truth of “faith alone in Christ alone.” (19)

- ◆ Having established some standards for Jewish and Gentile fellowship, the leaders of the Jerusalem Church send their decision in a letter to the Church of Antioch with Judas and Silas along with Paul and Barnabas. (20-29)

- ◆ The Church at Antioch is encouraged and strengthened in the Lord. (30-35)

LESSONS FOR TODAY

1. How could a former Pharisee so strongly oppose fellow-Pharisees who were genuine believers?

The best explanation for Paul’s unique stance is to be found in his view of his past religion – Pharisaism. The Pharisees sought to bring their Pharisaism with them into Christianity; Paul left his Pharisaism behind. The Pharisees took pride in their Pharisaism; Paul counted it as “dung,” boasting only in Christ. Paul saw his Pharisaism as a works system, in which a man could take pride in his spirituality, and he utterly renounced it when he came to faith in Jesus as Messiah.

2. How much of our baggage have we tried to bring along with us when we came to faith?

Paul looked upon his past religious achievements and counted them not only as worthless, but as offensive. And that is precisely what religion is to God. God does not want religious people; He wants “sinners” who would confess their sins and trust in Christ. Leave the religious baggage behind! When you see how offensive it is to God, that will make it easier to forsake.

3. Is there a time to fight?

There are times to avoid conflict, as we can see from other passages of Scripture, but here, it is the gospel itself which is under attack. Men, intentionally or not, were trying to adapt the gospel to their own liking, and it cannot be done. Paul's strong words in the book of Galatians are proof that there is no toleration of any error which would corrupt the gospel. Christians can disagree on many subjects, but they cannot differ on the gospel. In that we must always stand firm and united.