

***Journey Through Acts***  
***“The Grace Of The Gospel”***  
***Acts 15:1-35***

**Introduction:**

1. Let's Turn Back In Our Bibles Tonight:
  - To Acts 15 - Where:
    - In Our Journey Through Acts:
      - We Come To A Bit Of An:
        - “Intermission” - From Luke's Account:
          - Of The Missionary Outreach:
            - Of The Church!
  - Already - The Church:
    - Has Fulfilled Much:
      - Of The Lord's Commission To Her:
        - Back In 1:8 - When He Said - “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth!”
2. Well - Reaching Out To:
  - The “Utter-Most Part Of The Earth” Was:
    - Already Underway - Through The Ministries:
      - First - Of Peter - And Then:
        - Of Paul & Barnabas!
    - In Fact - On Their First Missionary Journey:
      - They Already Reached:
        - The Interior Of The Roman Province:
          - Of Asia - And Even Into:
            - The Region Of Galatia, Preaching The Gospel Of God's Grace To Both Jews & Gentiles Alike!
  - But - Before They Went Further:
    - In The Wisdom & Providence Of God:
      - It Was Time For The Church As A Whole:
        - To Come Together - Both Jews & Gentiles:
          - To Make Sure That They Were Getting The Gospel Right!
            - To Make Sure - That The Message Remained A Message Of Grace!
3. And - As We Will See:
  - This Was Important - Because Of:
    - The First Thing We Come To In Acts 15:
      - And That Is:

**1. *The Enemies Of God's Grace In The Gospel!***

- In 15:1-2 - Where We Read:
  - “And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. / When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question!”
- The Message That Paul & Barnabas:
  - Had Preached Wherever They Went:
    - Is Summed Up For Us Later - In Acts 16:31 - Where - In Answer To The Question By The Philippian Jailer - “What Must I Do To Be Saved” - “They Said, Believe On The Lord Jesus Christ, And Thou Shalt Be Saved!”
  - And Then - Later:
    - In Paul's Letter To The Ephesians:
      - He Offers This Clear Message Of The Gospel - In Ephesians 2:8-9 - “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: / Not of works, lest any man should boast!”
- So - The Message Of The Gospel:
  - Was - And Still Is - The Message:

- Of God's Grace To Sinners!
  - That - There Is Nothing A Person:
    - Needs To Do Or Even Can Do:
      - To Be Saved From Their Sin - But To Believe!
- To Believe:
  - On The Lord Jesus Christ:
    - His Life, His Death, His Burial:
      - And His Resurrection:
        - For Their Salvation From Sin!
- This Message:
  - Is Clear & Simple & Straightforward!
    - But - To This Message:
      - People Are Always Trying To:
        - Either Add Something Or Take Away Something That Eventually Makes It A Salvation Of Works:
          - Instead Of Grace!
  - And All This Started At The Very Beginning!
    - When Some Jewish Members Of The Church:
      - In Jerusalem - Who Were Still:
        - Connected To Their Old Jewish Ways Of Thinking & Living:
          - Made Their Way To The Church In Antioch - Which Was Made Up Of Primarily Gentile Believers:
            - And Told Them Grace Was Not All That Was Needed To Be Saved!
      - In Addition To Their Faith In Jesus:
        - They Also Needed To Go Along:
          - With The Jewish Rituals & Ceremonies:
            - In Order To Be Saved!
      - That Is:
        - They Were Teaching:
          - That Because Christ Was A Jew:
            - To Become A True Christian, You Need To Become A Jew First!
    - Now - Some Of These Jewish Members:
      - May Have Been Well-Meaning - At First:
        - But When Paul & Barnabas & The Rest Of The Church In Antioch:
          - Tried To Share With Them "The Grace Of The Gospel" More Perfectly:
            - In The Words Of Luke - 15:2 - There Was "No Small Dissension And Disputation!"
      - So - Paul & Barnabas:
        - Along With Some Other Members Of The Antioch Church:
          - Including Titus - We Learn From Galatians:
            - Head To The Jerusalem Church:
              - To See What Was Going On!
                - And To Make Sure Everyone Was On The Same Page Of The Gospel!
        - Now - We Can See From This That:
          - Anything & Anyone That Detracts:
            - From The Grace Of The Gospel:
              - Is - In Truth - An Enemy Of The Gospel!
                - And This Is Why We Must Always Strive To Get & To Give The Gospel Right!
          - And So - As Paul & Barnabas:
            - Make Their Way To Jerusalem - We Read About:

## 2. ***The Evidence Of God's Grace In The Gospel!***

- 15:3-5 - "And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. / And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them!"
  - As Paul & Barnabas Traveled Through The Country:

- They Shared With The Churches:
  - Along The Way - All That God Had Done:
    - On Their First Missionary Journey!
- And How That:
  - In Nearly Every City & Town They Went To:
    - Gentiles Were Turning To & Trusting In:
      - Jesus - And Receiving The Gifts:
        - Of The Holy Spirit!
          - The Same Gifts The Jewish Believers Had Received!
  - And This Was Taking Place:
    - Even Where There Had Been:
      - No Jewish Influence!
        - Either Through Their Synagogues Or Even Through Their Scriptures!
- And In This Way:
  - Paul & Barnabas:
    - Were Providing Solid Evidence:
      - Of God's Grace In The Gospel!
        - Which - They Were Going To Need Once They Got To Jerusalem!
    - Because - Once They Arrived:
      - They Soon Discovered That There Were Some:
        - In The Church - Who Were Teaching There - The Same Thing Doctrine:
          - They Were Fighting Against In Antioch!
  - 15:5 - "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses!"
    - Now - We Will Soon See That:
      - This Was Not What *All* The Church:
        - Believed & Taught - But Some!
          - And God Was Going To Use This Opportunity To Bring Proper Discipline Into The Church As Well!
      - And So - We Come To What Has Been Described:
        - As The First "Church Council" - There In:
          - Jerusalem! But - Really - It Wasn't Anything Like The Subsequent Church Councils In Church History!
            - This Council Didn't Really Decide On Anything! Instead, It Brought The Church Back Together In The Truth!
      - And In The Ensuing Discussion:
        - From The Words Of:
          - Peter & James - We Read About:

### 3. ***The Essence Of God's Grace In The Gospel!***

- 15:6-18 - "And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. / 7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. / 8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; / 9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. / 10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? / 11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. / 12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. / 13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: / 14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. / 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, / 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: / 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. / 18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world!"
  - The Essence Of The Gospel:
    - Is Grace!
      - God's Undeserved & Unmerited Favor:
        - To Save Any & All Who Turn To & Trust In Jesus:

- For Their Salvation From Sin!

- Peter Shares This Truth:
  - With The Entire Church:
    - In 15:11 - “But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they!”
  - And With These Words - Peter Confirmed:
    - That Christianity:
      - Has No Ties To The Jewish Laws & Religion - Except For The Fact That:
        - Jesus Came To Fulfill Them All!
  - So - Both Jews & Gentiles:
    - Enter Into The Same Church:
      - The Same Way!
        - Through Faith Alone In Jesus!
- But - This Is Not All:
  - That God’s Grace In The Gospel:
    - Means! Because - As We Will Learn:
      - From The Speech & Letter:
        - Of James - It Is Also:

#### 4. ***The Example Of God’s Grace In The Gospel!***

- You See - Those Of Us Who Have Received God’s Grace:
  - In The Gospel - Need To Extend God’s Grace:
    - Through The Gospel!
      - And This Is Why James Adds:
        - In 15:19-29 - “Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: / 20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. / 21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. / 22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: / 23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: / 24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: / 25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, / 26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. / 27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. / 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; / 29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well!”
  - Now - When James Spoke These Words:
    - He Was Not Acting As A “Pope-Like” Figure!
      - His “Sentence” Was Simply His Judgment & Opinion Informed From God’s Own Words & Work!
    - And So - In 15:25 - We Read That The Church As A Whole Agree With James - “It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul!”
    - But - What Do The Words Of James Mean?
      - Was He Adding To The Gospel:
        - When He Wrote - 15:29 - “That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication!” (?)
  - We Get The Part:
    - About Fornication - But What About Those Other Things:
      - That Still Sound So Jewish?
        - Was He Adding Another Burden:
          - On Those Gentile Christians?
  - One Thing To Note:
    - Is The Tone Of The Letter!
      - It Was Not In The Form Of A Commandment:
        - But A Recommendation!
          - At The End Of 15:29 - It Is Added - “From Which Ye Keep Yourselves, Ye

Shall Do Well!"

- But Also - In 15:21 - This Rationale Is Given:
  - "For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day!"
- The Church As A Whole:
  - Both Jews & Gentiles:
    - Both From Jerusalem & Antioch:
      - Agreed With God's Grace In The Gospel!
  - But - They Also Knew:
    - That Their Freedom In The Gospel Could Still Become A Stumbling-Block To Others!
      - To Other Believers:
        - Jews Or Gentiles!
        - Or Even To Unbelievers!
- And So - God's Grace To Us:
  - Becomes An Example:
    - Of Our Grace To Others!
      - We Need To Be Willing To:
        - Limit Our Christian Liberty At Times - For The Sake Of Those Who Are Lost Or Weak!
    - This Is Something Paul Would Later Address:
      - In 1 Corinthians 8:9 - "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak!"
  - Sometimes - We Can Become So:
    - "Proud" In The Gospel Of Grace:
      - That We Forget About Its Example:
        - Of Grace!
    - We Need To Be Sensitive:
      - In Our Relationships With Others:
        - As We Spread The Truth In Love! (Ephesians 4:15)
          - Because - Then - We Can Experience Even More:

##### 5. ***The Exhortation Of God's Grace In The Gospel!***

- Which We Find In - 15:30-35 - "So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: / 31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. / 32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. / 33 And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. / 34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still. / 35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also!"
  - Only The Grace Of The Gospel:
    - Can Do What We Just Read:
      - In These Verses!
  - Only The Grace Of The Gospel:
    - Could Take What, At First, Seemed To Spell Disaster:
      - To The Church:
        - And Bring About:
          - Joy & Consolation & Exhortation & Confirmation & Peace!
- How Many Times:
  - Would Discord & Division:
    - In The Church Be Solved:
      - Or Even Averted In The First Place:
        - If We All Remembered The Grace Of God In The Gospel!

##### **Conclusion:**

1. Well - With This Matter Settled:
  - And The Grace Of The Gospel:
    - Affirmed Once Again:
      - By Both Jews & Gentiles:
        - The Mission Of The Church:

- Could Continue - With One Accord!

2. And So - As Paul:

- Begins His:

- Second Missionary Journey:

- A Member Of The Jerusalem Church:

- Will Join Him:

- Silas - To Show Their Solidarity In The Grace Of The Gospel!

3. Let Us Tonight:

- Remember God's Grace:

- In The Gospel:

- And Then - Extend That Grace:

- To Others - Who May Be Lost Or Weak In The Faith:

- So That There Might Be Greater Joy & Peace In The Lord!

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