

**ye  
cannot  
be  
saved**

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***Acts 15:1 – 13***

~ In our previous two reports from our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God, we carefully examined the account of the first missionary journey undertaken by Paul and Barnabus. If you have not read our last two reports from the book of Acts, I highly suggest you go back and read them now. These two missionaries have now returned from the Galatian country to Antioch; and the door for preaching the Gospel of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is wide open to the entire world beyond Israel. When they returned to Jerusalem, the church was already experiencing its first epic crisis.

The early church in Jerusalem was wholly Jewish, and many believers were Levite priests. There arose strife and contention concerning relinquishing the Mosaic Law. That is, they questioned if they should require the rituals – the Sabbath observance, other outward trappings and forms of law, mainly circumcision – continue to be observed. They also wanted to require Gentiles joining the church to keep the Mosaic Law. Should they continue to go to the temple on the feast days? Many felt they needed to continue to observe certain ordinances in the Mosaic System of Levitical Law. The priests would fast and make certain vows - and expected everyone else claiming to love God to keep whatever portions of the law they deemed worthy of keeping. It became entirely subjective on that basis. The priests wanted to mandate anyone coming into the church observe the Mosaic System as they were instructed and without questioning. Keeping the law was, more or less, an initiation for the Gentiles. The end result of sustained religion was the priests teaching that the Gentiles could only be saved by the keeping of the law. Think that all through after praying for wisdom, judgment and discernment, my beloved.

In this section of Scripture, the apostles are forced to clarify church doctrine concerning keeping the Mosaic System of Levitical Law. It seems

they didn't really know what to do or say about it. So, the first council of the church was called; and the first meeting dealt specifically with circumcision. There have been other great councils of the church that ruled on critical issues, such as inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture. Another council declared the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ; and determined from Scripture He is both God and man. There have been various other councils since then, also. Many people think we need a council today; and I happen to agree.

Unfortunately, we couldn't get the different groups together safely today because they generally want to stone each other. It seems there is always an impasse preventing any two groups from meeting around the Person of Christ. The pride of the church, as we know it today, totally removes it from the Person of Christ. Our theology isn't a question of ritual, ceremony or church membership; what IS in question right now is your personal relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Most people just want to argue about dead and vain rituals that, quite frankly, God doesn't look upon. Those people don't fellowship with Him – although they say they do. They hold a great big Bible under their arms on Sunday as they lustily sing the songs – but – on Monday, the Lord Jesus becomes vague and illusive once again. Well, Christ is to occupy the very center of our lives and be the center of our attention. We should be thinking about Him constantly. We should pray even more. All of the situations in life today – our tensions and anxiety – should be focused on Christ and His leading....

***1 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.***

***2 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.***

~ So, the Gospel immediately comes into question; but it's merely a legal point. If you want a fully detailed explanation for this council, you'll find it in the entirety of the epistle to the Galatians. We'll cover that book soon

enough; and we're going to spend a considerable amount of time examining it. But let me say in this report briefly the Gospel is used in two senses in the New Testament. First, there are the basic and essential facts of the Gospel as Paul gives them in first Corinthians chapter fifteen verses one through four; and those facts are the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the Gospel, nothing but the Gospel, and nothing else is the Gospel. Paul makes that more than abundantly clear. It is essential to meet around the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ first and foremost.

*1 Corinthians 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures ~*

*1 Corinthians 15:13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: 14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. 15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. 18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable ~*

*~ If the Lord Jesus Christ is not raised from the dead, we have no Gospel and no salvation available to us today ~*

*1 Corinthians 15:20 But now is Christ raised from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept ~*

Secondly, there is the interpretation of the facts of the Gospel message. That basic truth is found in the epistle to the Galatians. This interpretation is the crux of the matter the council of churches was considering at the time in which we are studying:

*Galatians 3:22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe ~*

*Galatians 2:15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified ~*

These are fundamental and critical Scriptural truths to comprehend correctly at this point in our expedition. The Judaeizers of that day were much different than the religiously liberal today. The modern liberal will matter-of-factly deny the facts of the Gospel message. They cannot and will not accept that Jesus died for our sins. They do NOT deny He died on the cross, but only as a matter of record. Of course, there are others who deny Jesus ever existed; and they have no choice but to proclaim He did not die on a cross. Unfortunately, for them, historical facts aren't dismissed by reasonable, thinking people. The modern-day liberal also denies the physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, too, naturally.

In the day in which we are studying, the religious ruler could not deny the Gospel facts because there were too many witnesses to them. They wanted to; but they were already clinging to credibility, and denial would have left them with no credibility at all. Five hundred witnesses saw Him after the resurrection. Facts are unequivocally established when five hundred witnesses have the same story. See, the facts of the Gospel are not questionable to man; it is the interpretation of those facts that are questioned. The only testimony we have is when the Spirit of God works through us in our personal relationship of trust and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. Should we go through the ritual of the law? Is the work of Christ on the cross adequate to save us? ~

***3 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.***

***4 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.***

~ One of the things God had done with them was to move them safely through Galatia; where they had declared the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul and Barnabus are saying that since the Gentiles believed the Gospel Message and accepted Christ – they were saved. As we read on, Pharisee’s appeared to believe, but the problem was, they added to the Gospel. When the Gospel is added to, then we don’t have the Gospel; all we have is religion. The ONLY approach we can make to Christ is through faith. There is no other way in which we can come to God. Jesus saith, “I am the way, the truth and the life; and no man cometh unto the Father but by Me!” The only question God is asking you is: what will you do with My Son Who died for you? Your answer to that question will determine your eternal destiny. God doesn’t lay down some rules and tell us to be good little Sunday school boys and girls. God never says He wants us to joint a church. No wonder the church and Christianity have become a cause for ridicule. The Lord Jesus Christ died for us and that, my friends, is the beginning and the entire story of Christianity....

***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.***

***6 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.***

~ When Peter rose up to speak, I am sure he had already been a part of the “much disputing” – and had a whole lot more to say, too – because Simon Peter always had something to say. Here, Peter sums it up for the third time. Also, Simon Peter is still recovering from the shock of being in a

Gentile home where he preached the Gospel without law; they were uncircumcised pagans, and they likely ate pork. They were utterly ignorant of the Mosaic System and yet they were saved. We must remember Peter was what we could call a narrow-minded Jew. I just don't believe Simon Peter ever got very far away from the Mosaic Law; and, yet, he was saved by grace. If you don't want to eat pork, don't eat it, friends. If you want to observe Saturday as the Sabbath - then you go right ahead. However, don't tell me what to do or not do. I don't report to you. I report directly to my Father in Heaven – through Christ....

***8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, 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?***

~ Simon Peter went into the home of Cornelius and presented the facts of the Gospel and, as a result, the family believed and was saved. Because they believed, they were saved. Period. There's nothing to add to that. The Holy Spirit came upon them and, friends, that's the way we are saved - BY FAITH! Salvation does not happen as the result of doing something. The Lord Jesus Christ did it ALL for us two thousand years ago. Peter knew their fathers never kept the law and the men in this council knew they didn't keep the law, either. God never saved anyone by keeping the law. Not one man on this earth has EVER kept it; except for the Lord Jesus.

God saves man on ONE basis: the death, burial and resurrection of His Son. The sacrifice made in the Old Testament was made by faith alone. Abel knew the lamb he slew didn't take away his sins, but he did know the lamb pointed to the Savior the Lord had promised his mother. Abel knew the seed of the woman would bring He Who came and bruised the serpents head; and Abel believed God. Friends, why don't we just admit that we do not and cannot keep the law? Keeping some of it is foolish. There is NOTHING that will make a bigger hypocrite out of a person than the

pretense of living on some illusory higher plane or possessing the ability of more-forward thinking than others, or believing we are simply well-pleasing to God. One of those three descriptors fits nearly every modern self-professing believer: and it's all fatal. To say you are keeping the Mosaic System of Levitical Law or the teachings found in the Sermon on the Mount while trying to convince others you keep the law, renders you nothing in the world but a counterfeit Christian! Why can't you admit you are a sinner in need of a Savior? What are you hiding? We cannot please God of our own accord, my beloved, because we have NO capacity for God whatsoever. He that cometh to Him must come in faith; and must worship in spirit and in truth. Those will He in no wise cast out....

***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:***

~ So, our Spiritual Safari concludes this report at the church council in Jerusalem with Paul and Barnabus. Remember, Paul has been raised from the dead after being executed by stoning. He has quite the story to tell now. These are the apostles who had sign gifts, friends. We don't have apostle's today, and we don't need sign gifts for credibility. You aren't going to save anyone by displaying any gift you may think you have. Not one. Not ever. What we DO have today is a whole lot of selfie-stuff that easily takes our hearts and minds off of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's very easy not to study the Bible, friends. I know that. We have every legitimate excuse under the sun in contemporary society not to stop and study the Bible. Modern Christianity has become all experience with no growth in the knowledge of our Savior and Lord. There is no genuine salvation happening in this sea of self-professing believers. What does the Lord Jesus Christ mean to you right now, friends? God would be lucky to get

ten comments comprised of complete sentences answering that question. I think I know now how Abraham felt looking over Lot. This world isn't anxious to accept Christ, my beloved. They're seeking a liberal Jesus of whom there is no record. They'll accept nothing less than an idol Jesus they have concocted as a religious philosophy; and said philosophy operates according to them – not you, by the way.

In our next report, we'll expound in detail, providing a complete explanation of all of this; however, apparently, this James is the James who had taken the place of James the apostle, the brother of John - who had been put to death. There is definitely a legitimate question of James' identity, to be sure. Is this "James the less?" Does he become James the leader? Is this the James that wrote the epistle of James, who very well could have been yet another James? Well, when we get to the epistle of James, we'll sort those questions out, too. Stay with us. James is a long ways off.

I believe the proper course of study in the Book of Acts is about the same as studying the historical books of the Old Testament, such as the double books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles; and that is to simultaneously consider the prophets who prophesied at those times. For instance, when studying the reign of Hezekiah, one should take up the book of Isaiah. They go together. Well, from here forward in the Book of Acts, it will serve us well as we pull in portions of the epistles of Paul, Peter, James and John to the churches in relation to their ministerial geographical locations. We've already made a significant reference to Galatians. This would be the proper place to bring in that entire epistle. If you consider yourself a sincere student of Scripture, flip over and read Galatian's through without stopping; after praying for wisdom, judgment and discernment.

Also, in our next report, James will sum up the church council at Jerusalem. He will put down God's program for the future. There are people today who have their noses pressed tight against a window of a new dispensation and, quite frankly, they have big problems. Most people do not comprehend one percent of Scripture and are utterly blind to the new dispensation that opened up at the time in which we are studying. My feeling is God is in no hurry to open the next age. Let's focus on the



Scriptural dispensation of the Day of Pentecost ushering in the church age. The proper, correct and complete teaching of the Word of God in the sound doctrine of the apostles is all but absent from the face of the earth. Those crying “apostasy” in the church – make a note – you’re complicit in it ~

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