**ALL ABOUT GRACE**

**Acts 15:1-41**

* *“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom prescribed by Moses, you cannot be saved.”* (Acts 15:1)
* *“The apostles and the elders gathered to consider this matter. 7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, ‘Brothers, you are aware that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the gospel message and believe. 8 And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he also did to us. 9 He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 10 Now then, why are you testing God by putting a yoke on the disciples’ necks that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear?’”* (Acts 15:6-10)
* *“On the contrary, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in the same way they are.”* (Acts 15:11)
* **Nothing that we do makes us right with God, but is only through embracing the gift of salvation that Jesus freely offers us that we can be made right with God!**
* *“For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift— 9 not from works, so that no one can boast.”* (Ephesians 2:8-9)
* *“The whole assembly became silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul describe all the signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. 13 After they stopped speaking, James responded, “Brothers, listen to me. 14 Simeon has reported how God first intervened to take from the Gentiles a people for his name…..19 Therefore, in my judgment, we should not cause difficulties for those among the Gentiles who turn to God.”* (Acts 15:12-14;19)
* **As followers of Jesus we should be removing any barrier that makes it more difficult for people to understand and turn to Jesus for salvation.**
* **Why on earth would we want to make the most valuable and important thing every human needs harder to grasp and obtain? A rhetorical question.**
* *“But instead we should write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from eating anything that has been strangled, and from blood.”* (Acts 15:20)
* **We should develop a level of Christian maturity that leads us to avoid causing unnecessary offense with our fellow believers.**
* *“Then the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, decided to select men who were among them and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: Judas, called Barsabbas, and Silas, both leading men among the brothers. 23 They wrote: ‘From the apostles and the elders, your brothers, To the brothers and sisters among the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:*

*Greetings. 24 Since we have heard that some without our authorization went out from us and troubled you with their words and unsettled your hearts, 25 we have unanimously decided to select men and send them to you along with our dearly loved Barnabas and Paul, 26 who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who will personally report the same things by word of mouth. 28 For it was the Holy Spirit’s decision—and ours—not to place further burdens on you beyond these requirements: 29 that you abstain from food offered to idols, from blood, from eating anything that has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. You will do well if you keep yourselves from these things. Farewell.’”* (Acts 15:22-29)

* *“So they were sent off and went down to Antioch, and after gathering the assembly, they delivered the letter. 31 When they read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. 32 Both Judas and Silas, who were also prophets themselves, encouraged the brothers and sisters and strengthened them with a long message. 33 After spending some time there, they were sent back in peace by the brothers and sisters to those who had sent them. 35 But Paul and Barnabas, along with many others, remained in Antioch, teaching and proclaiming the word of the Lord.”* (Acts 15:30-35)

**BEWARE OF PEOPLE WHO TEACH THAT YOU NEED JESUS PLUS SOMETHING ELSE TO BE SAVED**

* *“Some men came down from Judea and began to teach the brothers, “’Unless you are circumcised according to the custom prescribed by Moses, you cannot be saved.’”* (Acts 15:1)
* **Jesus + Nothing = Everything**

**BE PREPARED TO DEFEND THE TRUE GOSPEL WHEN FALSE TEACHING ARISES**

* *“After Paul and Barnabas had engaged them in serious argument and debate, Paul and Barnabas and some others were appointed to go up to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem about this issue.”* (Acts 15:2)
* **We need to be wise in what issues we decide to “do battle” over, but defending the Gospel of grace is non-negotiable.**

**BE COMMITTED TO UNITY WITH OTHERS OVER INDULGING IN PERSONAL LIBERTIES**

* *“For it was the Holy Spirit’s decision—and ours—not to place further burdens on you beyond these requirements: 29 that you abstain from food offered to idols, from blood, from eating anything that has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. You will do well if you keep yourselves from these things. Farewell.’”* (Acts 15:22-29)
* *“When they read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.”* (Acts 15:31)
* **“There will be times in which Christians should abstain from certain liberties in order to maintain peaceful social interactions with others.” – Tony Merida**
* **“Let’s be an iron pillar on the gospel, and let’s be charitable to others regarding non-essentials, for the good of the church, for the advancement of the gospel among all nations, and for the glory of Jesus.” – Tony Merida**