

# **“FACING FALSE TEACHERS IN THE CHURCH”**

## **(Or, “The Importance of a Church Business Meeting”)**

**Acts 15:1-11**

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### INTRODUCTION

At this point in the development of early Christianity, the church has had to face at least **four big problems**: 1) Deceit and selfishness within the body (Ananias and Sapphira--ch. 5); 2) Prejudice and neglect in financial policies— (the Greek widows--chapter 6); 3) Persecution of leaders and then the whole church (chapters 4, 5, 12; chapters 8-9); 4) Reception of the Gentiles into Christianity (chapters 10 & 11).

**This fifth major problem is really a continuation of the 4<sup>th</sup>, but with a different twist. Certain teachers from Jerusalem took it upon themselves to cause controversy in the broader church by promoting **false doctrine**—and a false doctrine that if not dealt with promptly and efficiently and sternly could destroy the heart of Christianity. This doctrine cuts right to the heart of Biblical Christianity: **SALVATION BY FAITH vs. SALVATION THROUGH WORKS.****

Some Christians are too passive—“peace at any cost”; “doctrine does not matter—only love”; “can’t we all just get along?” “Leave false teaching alone; the truth will prevail and false doctrine will die out.”

If we want to see the Apostle Paul’s attitude toward a different [i.e. **false**] Gospel, see Gal. 1:6-9. In fact, the circumstances that led to Paul writing the epistle to the Galatians developed directly from the circumstances we examine here in this chapter. Some of the false teachers who caused the trouble in Antioch later spread the same trouble in the first churches established by Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey—likely going there **right after** Paul’s second missionary journey through this region and contradicting the things taught by Paul.

But today and next week we focus on the origin of the problem and the solution proposed by the Church of Jerusalem. We can learn much from examining the way the early church handled its doctrinal issues.

### **WE MUST NEVER COMPROMISE THE TRUE GOSPEL—IT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HELL.**

- I. SALVATION BY KEEPING THE LAW (Does External Ritual—*Circumcision*/Baptism—Save?)
  - A. Schismatic Teachers from the Home Church (1-2)
    1. Statement of their position: Must be \_\_\_\_\_ in order to be saved (1)
    2. Quarrel and Dispute by Paul and Barnabas—some things are worth fighting over. (2a).
    3. Delegation sent by the church to Jerusalem (2b; Titus included—see Gal. 2)
  - B. Journey to Jerusalem (3)
    1. Sent off royally
    2. Evangelizing and edifying on the way—note the \_\_\_\_\_ response of believers.
  - C. Reception at Jerusalem (4)

1. Cordial hospitality—the church, apostles, and the elders
  2. Detailed Missionary report
  - D. Schismatic Teachers at Jerusalem (5)
    1. Origin—Pharisees
    2. Circumcision and \_\_\_\_-keeping are necessary
- II. SALVATION BY GRACE ALONE (6-11)
- A. Business Meeting of the Church (6)
 

(Gal. 2 shows that a private meeting of Paul with the apostles and elders took place first between verses 5 & 6; full “debate” takes place—same word as v. 2)
  - B. Speech of Peter (7-11)
    1. God’s \_\_\_\_\_ of Peter to use the “keys” to reach Gentiles with “the word of the Gospel”—see chapter 10 (7-9)
      - They “\_\_\_\_\_” (7)
      - They received the \_\_\_\_\_ —just as the Jews at Pentecost. (8)
      - God—the “knower of the hearts” treated both groups the same and “bore witness” (8)
      - God made “no distinction between” the two groups. (9)
      - God “cleansed the hearts of the Gentiles **by** \_\_\_\_\_—needed no external cleansing. (9)
    2. Man’s Demand for circumcision is to \_\_\_\_\_ God (10-11)
      - Compare Israel in the wilderness—demand for food and water after He had just provided at the Red Sea.
      - It would “question His right to receive the Caesarean Gentiles as He had done.”
      - “It would be to sit in judgment on the Almighty.”
      - It would be to provoke His displeasure and even invite His chastisement (cf. 5:9).” (p. 232)
      - Compare how Ananias and Sapphira had tested the Lord’s ability to read their hearts (ch. 5).
    3. Man’s demand for circumcision is to demand the keeping of the \_\_\_\_\_ Law (v. 5, 10)
      - It would be taking up a heavy yoke—a yoke neither the current Jews nor their fathers were able to carry.
      - Jesus had offered a “yoke that was easy and light (Mt. 11:29-30)
    4. Man’s demand for circumcision and the Law is to reject “salvation by \_\_\_\_\_ **of the Lord Jesus**”
    5. BOTH JEWS AND GENTILES ARE SAVED BY \_\_\_\_\_ **AND THROUGH** \_\_\_\_\_.

## CONCLUSION

The issue is clear:

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