


Day 1

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

Paul Is Accepted By The Apostles

¹ Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. ² I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain. ³ Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. ⁴ This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. ⁵ We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

Q1. What was the issue Paul wanted addressed (verses 2 & 4)?

Q2. Verse 3: Why did Paul single-out Titus?

Q3. Verse 4: Paul writes that they have “freedom”. How might they become “slaves”?

Acts 15:1-31 [NIV-1984]

¹ Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."

² This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So, Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.

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³ The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the brothers very glad.

⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses."

⁶ The apostles and elders met to consider this question.

⁷ After much discussion, [Simon] Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. ⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

¹² The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.

¹³ When they finished, James spoke up: "Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴ Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself. ¹⁵ The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: ¹⁶ "'After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, ¹⁷ that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things' [Amos 9:11-12] ¹⁸ that have been known for ages.

¹⁹ "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. ²⁰ Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. ²¹ For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath."


²² Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers.

²³ With them they sent the following letter: The apostles and elders, your brothers, To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. ²⁴ We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. ²⁵ So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul -- ²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. ²⁸ It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: ²⁹ You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell.

³⁰ The men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. ³¹ The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message.

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Day 2

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⁶ As for those who seemed to be important -- whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance -- those men added nothing to my message.

Q4. Paul's words in verse 6 seem harsh. Wouldn't knowing to whom Paul spoke lend credibility to this Letter to the Galatians?

James 2:1-10 [NIV-1984] [The Book of James was written by Jesus' half-brother James and is the same 'James' mentioned in Acts 15:13 (↑).]

¹ My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.

² Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. ³ If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," ⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵ Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? ⁶ But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

Q5. Paul writes, "those men added nothing to my message". Wouldn't Paul receive additional praise if he wrote 'the Jerusalem Apostles agreed with me'? What does Paul's statement tell the reader?

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⁷ On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews.

⁸ For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles.


Q6. In Acts 15:7-11 (↑), we read that Simon Peter was also ministering to the Gentiles. Are Paul's statements (about Peter's intended audience) contradictory to actual events?

Acts 10:28, 34-35 [NIV-1984] [Simon Peter and the other Apostles ministered to Jews. That said, God changed their discriminatory attitude. As recorded in Acts 10, Simon Peter was called by God to specifically minister to the Gentile Cornelius and his house. (Cornelius was a centurion living in Caesarea.) Cornelius and those, who heard Peter's message and believed, received the Holy Spirit, which Peter viewed as God's 'stamp of approval'.]

²⁸ [Simon Peter] said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean . . .

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right."

Day 3

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⁹ James, Peter, and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. ¹⁰ All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

Q7. Why did the Apostles and Paul make the agreement that one would minister to the Jews and the other to the Gentiles?

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- Q8. Why was there concern about the adversity faced by the Jerusalem Apostles and Believers? Were the Jewish religious leaders (e.g., Sanhedrin) still influential? And how might the decisions of the Sanhedrin impact the Jerusalem Apostles and Believers?
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Acts 11:29-30 [English Standard Version (ESV)]

²⁹ So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. ³⁰ And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

Acts 24:17 [NIV-1984]

[Paul said,] “After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings.”

Romans 15:26-27 [NIV-1984]

²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. ²⁷ They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.

1 Corinthians 16:3 [NIV-1984]


Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem.

2 Corinthians 8:1-4 [NIV-1984]

¹ And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ² Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³ For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

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Day 4

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Paul Opposes Cephas (Simon Peter)

¹¹ When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong.

Q9. How difficult might it be to confront a person known as a pillar of the church?

 The precise timeline for this event is unknown. With that acknowledgement, it may have occurred after the new Believers were dispersed by the persecution that followed the stoning of the Apostle Stephen (Acts 6 & 7; also, in Acts 11:19-27). The events that led up to the Paul/Peter confrontation probably occurred before Simon Peter ministered to the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10), before Paul and Barnabas shared the success of their ministry with the Council of the Jerusalem Apostles (Acts 15:12), and before the Jerusalem Apostles sent a letter to the “To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia” (Acts 15:22-31). In fact, during the Council of the Jerusalem Apostles (Acts 15), Simon Peter was a fierce advocate for the simple principle that Believers are “justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law” (Galatians 2:16).

¹² Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. ¹³ The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

Q10. We know from the Gospels that Peter was impulsive. Is it within his character that he would respond to criticism and ease away from his Gentile friends?

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Acts 15:1-2a, 5 [NIV-1984]

¹ Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." ² This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them . . . ⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses."

Q11. Are we Believers justified by faith in Christ Jesus? Or must we also obey the law of Moses (i.e., the Ten Commandments, including circumcision) to be right with God?


Q12. Is a person's salvation dependent upon that person's good deeds, as well as keeping the Old Testament law?

Acts 15:8-11 [NIV-1984]

[Peter spoke.] ⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them [Gentiles] by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

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Day 5

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¹⁴ When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

Q13. This must have been an intense confrontation. Can you briefly summarize Paul's concern?


Q14. Can you briefly summarize how the Gentiles may have viewed the confrontation between the two Apostles – men of God?

We Are Justified By Faith

¹⁵ "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' ¹⁶ know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Q15. How would you define "justify"?

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 jus·ti·fy (jūs'tə-fī')

1. To demonstrate or prove to be just, right, or valid: justified each budgetary expense as necessary; anger that is justified by the circumstances.
2. To free (a human) of the guilt and penalty attached to grievous sin. Used of God.
[© 2003-2023 Farlex, Inc. <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/justify>]

Q16. The Jews are God's "chosen", his "treasured possession" (Deuteronomy 7:6). Considering the "chosen" status of Jews, what justifies a Jew?


Deuteronomy 7:6 [NIV-1984]

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

 Ellicott's Commentary provides this explanation, which is written as if Paul – in the first person – explained: "We [Jews] belong by our birth to a privileged people. We are not of Gentile descent, and therefore abandoned to our sins. And yet, with all our privileges, we found that we could get no justification whatever from the Law; and this sent us to Christ. We thus abdicated our privileged position; we put ourselves on the same level as the Gentiles, and became (in the eye of the Law) sinners like them. Sinners?!?! Must we then admit that all Christ has done for us is to make us sinners? Far be so irreverent a thought. Our sin consists not in quitting the Law, but in returning to that which has once been abandoned. The function of the Law was preparatory and transitional. The Law itself taught me to expect its own abrogation. It was a stage on the way to Christ. To Him have I given in a complete adhesion. In His death I am severed from ancient ties. In His death I ceased to have any life of my own. All the life I have, man as I am, I owe to Christ, my Saviour. Thus I accept and do not reject and frustrate the gift so freely offered me: whereas, by going back to the Law for justification, I should be practically declaring the death of Christ useless and unprofitable." [©about 1880, *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, edited by Charles J Ellicott. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/galatians/2-15.htm>]

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Day 6

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¹⁷ "If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not!


Q17. Does Christ Jesus promote sin? Why?

Romans 7:19-20 [NIV-1984] [Paul wrote about sin in his Letter to the Romans]

¹⁹ For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do -- this I keep on doing.


²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

¹⁸ If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker.

 Verse 18 is difficult to understand. Instead of accusing specific people or a group of people, Paul uses himself as an example – and allows the Holy Spirit to sear the conscience of the “lawbreaker”.

Galatians 2:17-18 [The Message (MSG)]

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ Have some of you noticed that we are not yet perfect? (No great surprise, right?) And are you ready to make the accusation that since people like me, who go through Christ in order to get things right with God, aren't perfectly virtuous, Christ must therefore be an accessory to sin? The accusation is frivolous. If I was “trying to be good,” I would be rebuilding the same old barn that I tore down. I would be acting as a pretender.

 Paul is using a metaphor. “What I destroyed” meaning my old sinful nature – that former person who happily sinned without a backward glance – compared to the new person who is made new by his/her belief in the saving grace of Christ Jesus and the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The new person – the new Believer – is a new creation in Christ Jesus. However, if I choose to “rebuild” or reclaim my former sinful self, then I am a lawbreaker, a pretender, a transgressor.

Q18. We have a choice to make. Do I want to reclaim my old sinful self? Or do I want to remain a Believer in Christ Jesus and obedient to His Gospel? Which do you choose?

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¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

Q19. Verse 20: What does Paul mean when he states, "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me"?

Q20. Verse 21: What does the phrase mean "if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing"?

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