

Sermon Text Discussion 10/8/17

Acts 15:1-35 “Gospel Doctrine, Gospel Unity” by Drew Hunter

Overview

Acts 15 has been called the centerpiece and turning point in the book of Acts. As the truth of the gospel came under attack the early Christians determined it to be a first order issue – a “closed-handed” issue of central importance. Some Jewish believers pressed the question of what God requires for salvation, proposing that Gentiles needed to follow the Mosaic Law, including circumcision. The Apostles and other leaders opposed this teaching, declaring that salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus plus nothing else. At the same time they preserved and modeled gospel community by calling the Gentile believers to utilize their freedom in Christ to love their Jewish brothers by not causing them needless offense. Thus gospel community is based in truth and permeated with patience, acceptance, and kindness.

Acts 15: 1-35

- 1) Gospel Centrality (15: 1-5)
- 2) Gospel Clarity (15: 6-19)
- 3) Gospel Community (15: 20-35)

Quotations

“..the name of peace is indeed plausible and sweet, but cursed is that peace which is purchased with so great a loss that we suffer the doctrine of Christ to suffer by which we alone grow together into godly and holy unity.”

John Calvin
Commentary, 19:38

“The Jerusalem Council secured a double victory- a victory of truth confirming the gospel of grace and a victory of love in preserving the fellowship by sensitive concessions to conscientious Jewish scruples.”

John Stott
Acts, (p. 257)

Understanding & Application

- 1.) Some Jewish believers were demanding that the Mosaic Law be added to the gospel. In our day what additional requirements or expectations are some attempting to add as requirements for salvation?
- 2.) How have you been tempted to legalism? Are there ways you’ve found a love for tradition or rule-keeping that adds an unnecessary weight or requirement to yourself or others?

- 3.) In what ways are you prone to license or being a relativist (the hesitancy to “impose one’s views on others” even when scripture is clear on that issue)?
- 4.) This chapter points to the significance of history in the life of the church. How has learning about the history of God’s people in both the scriptures and post-biblical times been influential in your spiritual journey?
- 5.) The Reformation in the 16th century was another occasion in church history when leaders sought to clarify and live out gospel truth. Key words from Acts 15 that were hallmarks of the Reformation were grace, faith, Jesus, and scripture. What were the Reformers seeking to recover? What encouragement have you received from their efforts?
- 6.) The Apostles wrote to the Gentile converts encouraging them to not cause needless offense among the Jewish believers. In the American church, or our local body, where do we need to be careful of offending other believers in secondary matters? Are there places where do you sense the Lord wants you to express more love, patience, kindness.