

# A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

# THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

## OF THE APOSTLES

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, Associated

*An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely*

### ACTS 5:31-32

*"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."*

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

### Lesson #64

### COMMENTARY ON: 15:1-12

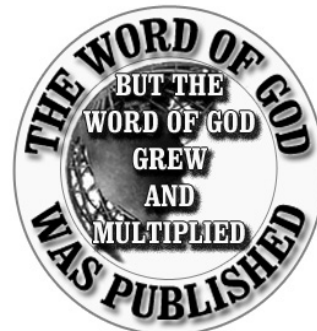
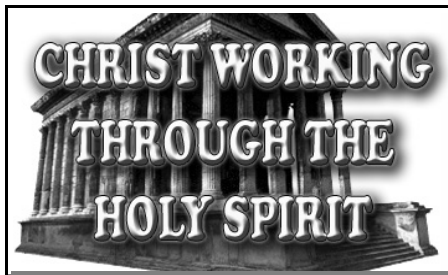
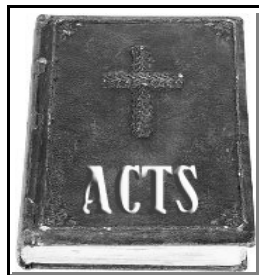
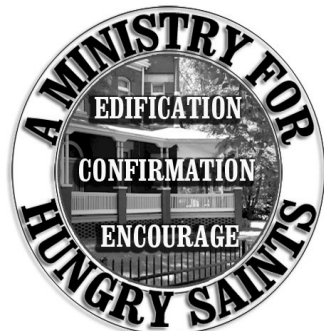
#### DEALING WITH TEACHERS OF CIRCUMCISION, #1

The practical transition from the Old Covenant to the New was not a simplistic one. At the time of our text, it was approximately seven years after the New Covenant was inaugurated, and Jesus began mediating it. Yet, there was such a marked contrast between the Old and the New that many did not perceive it as fully as possible. These were people whose minds had been bathed in Scripture, and while there were prophecies of the New Covenant, they lacked clarity until the time of their fulfillment arrived. Throughout God's dealings with men, this had been His manner – to open up the understanding of certain prophecies during the time they are actually being fulfilled. In this text, there will be sharp contention about circumcision and keeping the Law of Moses – particularly among Gentile converts. Holy men will meet and discuss this matter until it becomes clear to them. Such clarity is also the manner of the New Covenant.

### ACTS 17:26-27

*"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."*

" . . . and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

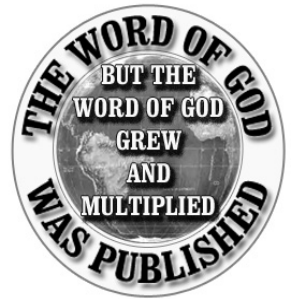


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



## The Book of Acts

### Lesson Number 64



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

**TRANSLATION LEGEND:** ALT = Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV = English Revised Version (1885), ESV = English Stand Version (2001), GNB = Good News (1966), GWN = God's Word (1995), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), L.ITV = Literal Translation of the Bible ((1976), LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MKJV = Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT =New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

**LEXICON LEGEND:** FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

**DISCLAIMER:** The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

# DEALING WITH TEACHERS OF CIRCUMCISION, #1

“<sup>15:1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; <sup>9</sup> And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. <sup>10</sup> 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? <sup>11</sup> But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. <sup>12</sup> 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.” (Acts 11:1-12)

## INTRODUCTION

The practical transition from the Old Covenant to the New was not a simplistic one. Beyond all question, the thorough, pleasing to God, and accomplishments of Christ were completely effective. Salvation could

*The Transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant was one that required spiritual discernment – by Given O. Blakely*

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never have been effected if this was not true. The extrication of men from the power of darkness, and their translation into the Kingdom of Christ could not commence until all of the Divine requirements had been met. **While the conformity of men to the image of Jesus (Rom 8:29) was a process that required a continual change (2 Cor 3:18), the basis of salvation could not be something that was gradually built over a period of time.**

Even though the things that Jesus accomplished are known among us, it is essential that they be stated again and again. This is because there is

nothing in human history that precisely parallels them. **Their implications extend beyond the perimeter of the human intellect.** Allow me to restate some of them in order that their magnitude can be again confirmed to your heart. All of these things were done in accordance with the Scriptures.

### WHAT MUST BE ACCOMPLISHED

- ⇨ Divinity must enter into the world clothed with human frailty, being made like unto the ones who would be saved (Isa 7:14; 9:6-7; John 1:14; Rom 8:3; Phil 2:6-7; Heb 2:16-17).
- ⇨ Before His work as Captain of our salvation began, the Savior must have been tempted in all points like as we are, yet be without sin. This was in order that He might fulfill His ongoing intercession (Heb 2:18; 4:15).
- ⇨ He must defeat the devil as a Man, overcoming the adversary in his own territory thoroughly and effectively. This He did by resisting the devil's temptations (Matt 4:1-11), casting demons out of those they victimized (Lk 11:20), as a man, exposing men to the pure glory of God (John 1:14; Matt 4:16; John 14:9), and living the entirety of His life in the world without so much as a single sin (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 3:5).
- ⇨ He must confirm before the eyes of men that He was superior to nature, which can by no means be controlled by men (Matt 8:27; 14:25).
- ⇨ While in this world as a Man, He must confirm His authority over the powers of darkness (Mk 1:27; 9:25 Lk 13:11-12).
- ⇨ The totality of sin – *“the sins of the world”* – must be taken away, made an end of, and destroyed (Dan 9:24;

John 1:29; 1 John 3:5).

- ⇨ In order for sin to be dealt with effectively, it had to be laid upon Jesus en mass, carried in His body, while He was, in reality, *“made to be sin for us”* (Isa 53:6; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:24).
- ⇨ Sin must be cursed in the body of Jesus, with the full judgment of God against sin being experienced by Him (Rom 8:3; Gal 3:13).
- ⇨ Satan had to be destroyed, so that he obtained no more power to retain men in bondage once they were united to Christ (Gen 3:15; Heb 2:14).
- ⇨ Satan, as the accuser of the brethren, had to be expelled from the heavenly realms (Rev 12:9-10).
- ⇨ The principalities and powers that held sway over the entirety of the mankind had to be plundered and their captives freed (Col 2:15).
- ⇨ The demands of the Law had to be fully satisfied by a man, so that it was no longer the standard of righteousness, and thus could not condemn those received by God (Matt 5:17; Rom 10:4).
- ⇨ Peace had to be made between God and man (Col 1:20).
- ⇨ The handwriting of ordinances that was against us had to be blotted out, so that they condemned us no more (Col 2:4).
- ⇨ The new and living way to God had to be raised up and sanctified for men (Heb 10:20).
- ⇨ The Old Covenant had to be terminated, and a New Covenant

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instituted by which men could draw near to God (2 Cor 3:3-11; Heb 6:19; 8:1-13).

- ⇨ A single Mediator had to be established in heaven through whom the New Covenant could be fully enacted (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6; 12:24).
- ⇨ An intercessor must be established in heaven that always lived to intercede for the redeemed (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25).
- ⇨ The Savior had to be invested with all power in heaven and earth, be seated in heaven, and be the effective Captain of our salvation (Acts 2:34-36; 10:36; Heb 2:10; 1 Pet 3:22).
- ⇨ A work must be done prior to men being saved that is so thorough that it allows God to be “just” or righteous in justifying sinners (Rom 3:26).

**our Savior Jesus Christ**” (2 Pet 1:1). With God, an unjust “*eternal salvation*” (Heb 5:9) is not possible. Should such a condition be possible, the devil could continue to accuse to God those who were saved, and could not have been justly expelled from heaven.

Both faith and hope require a satisfactorily completed foundation, or basis, for salvation. **There can be no question about the provision of salvation, even though doubts may exist concerning one’s experience of it.** Even in that theoretical case, the doubt must eventually be removed, for its very existence is a reproach to God and an evidence of unbelief.

**WHY SAY THESE THINGS?**

Is all of this nothing more than a needless technicality? Indeed not! What we are seeing in the book of Acts is the working out of the purpose of God among

confirmed in our text. While it is mandatory that men have a knowledge of the Scripture, their proper use of that knowledge is based upon their reasoning and perception, not their acquisition of the facts.

With men, extended research on a matter often uncovers flaws or imperfections. **That is because whatever natural men do carries with it something of their own imperfections.** However, this is not true of the Word of God. The more you consider the Word with a pure heart and in faith, the more you will see. Also, the more you integrate it with human experience, the more thoroughly life in Christ is understood.

**AT THE TIME OF OUR TEXT**

At the time of our text, it was approximately seventeen years after the New Covenant had been inaugurated, and Jesus began its mediation. Yet, there was such a marked contrast between the Old and the New that many did not perceive it as fully as possible.

These were people whose minds had been bathed in Scripture, and while there were many prophecies of the New Covenant, **they lacked clarity until the time of their fulfillment arrived.** Daniel was told of this Divine manner in Daniel 12:4. Throughout God’s dealings with men, this had been His style – to open up the understanding of certain prophecies during the time they are actually being fulfilled. Prior to their fulfillment, a limitation was placed on man’s understanding of those things. Their reality was not questioned, but the intricacies and manner of their outworking was not known. The uniqueness of the New Covenant message lies in the fact that it is a “*more sure word of prophecy*” – i.e. “*the prophetic word confirmed,*” <sup>NKJV</sup> or fulfilled. **The message of the New Covenant is not one of possibilities, but of accomplishments.** It is one that promotes and maintains faith, not speculation.

In the text for this lesson, there will be sharp contention about circumcision and keeping the Law of Moses – particularly among Gentile converts. Holy men will meet and discuss this matter until it becomes clear to

**In spiritual life, one can only know what is clearly seen by faith. Further, one’s faith cannot extend beyond their personal involvement in the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. In other words, the knowledge of God is not like a sort of manual of facts that we memorize.**

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE THINGS**

While the perfection of men extends over a lengthy period of time (2 Cor 3:18), the laying of the Foundation for their salvation cannot be done on that basis. Although numerous prophecies and preparatory works preceded the laying of the Foundation Stone, the placement of the Stone itself cannot be on that basis. Furthermore, the Foundation Stone could not be put into place until God had been fully satisfied regarding the matter of sin. Salvation could not be based upon Divine sympathy. The salvation itself must be an expression of the righteousness of God. Therefore Peter wrote, “*Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and*

those who had understanding of what had been accomplished by the Savior. That is why the messengers were so bold. It is why the Lord worked with them. It is why they were able to overturn erroneous ideas.

However, having said all of that, there is something else that is being made known in the record we are reviewing. **In spiritual life, one can only know what is clearly seen by faith.** Further, one’s faith cannot extend beyond their personal involvement in the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. In other words, the knowledge of God is not like a sort of manual of facts that we memorize. **There are aspects of the Kingdom of God that can only be fully known by arriving at proper conclusions.** In fact, this is the very thing that will be

them. Such clarity is also the manner of the New Covenant.

It is important to note that the contention concerned religious matters, not domestic, social, or political issues. It further had to do with something that God Himself had originated and affirmed in the text of Scripture, not tradition.

Among other things, this will show us that early believers did not allow for contradicting views of the Scripture. They determined to settle issues regarding the will and commandments of God. In our time, such resolutions are rarely sought. **Instead, men form a denomination around their crystalized views of Scripture, and begin to compete**

**in the market of religious ideas.** It is understood that every divergent view does not require extensive investigation. That is because the harmony or variance of some theological views are more pronounced than others. However, even in those cases, the truth of Scripture and the will of God must be firmly established.

## BRETHREN TAUGHT THE WRONG THING

***“15:1 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.”***

Remember, Paul and Barnabas are in Antioch, and that is the city to which some now had come. There had doubtless been a report throughout Judaea of the marvelous works that issued forth from the church there. They not only had a number of teachers and prophets, but were involved in an extensive outreach that was directed by the Holy Spirit of God. That certainly was enough to get the attention of surrounding areas, particularly in Judea. Now, an entourage of men come “down” from the high country of Judea, endeavoring to instruct the brethren more perfectly in the ways of the Lord. It ought to be noted that those who are serious about their religion, whether right or wrong, tend to be aggressive about it.

### AN AGGRESSIVE MANNER

*“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren...”*

This group of men did not come to “evangelize,” but to teach “the brethren.” They felt there were some doctrinal and practical deficiencies in Antioch, and therefore sought to correct them. Being Jews, they no doubt were persuaded they had a more thorough grasp of Kingdom matters than those from that area. Of course, they conveniently ignored the fact that there were prophets and teachers there, and that the Holy Spirit had used some of them in a rather extensive work in Gentile regions – a work that extended

over about two years. Yet, these “men” felt it necessary to come from Judaea to deliver what they felt to be a critical point of teaching. We will find that it was not an illuminated view, but one that was driven by minds without spiritual understanding.

### A MOSAIC REQUIREMENT

*“ . . . and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.”* Other versions read, *“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> and *“Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom*

virtually unknown in our time.

⇒ There was a commitment to doing what was perceived to be the will of God.

I say these things understanding that there was also a sectarian and factious spirit that existed among some. Whether or not that was the case with those to whom we are now introduced will be established by their response to the recorded discussions that follow. **As we will see, however, this was not a mere religious haranguing over the personal opinions of people who has no**

**The necessity for spiritual understanding, as opposed to a mere scholastic grasp of Scripture, can be seen in the matter before us: the binding of circumcision, as described by Moses, upon believers in Christ.**

*taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”*<sup>NIV</sup>

This is the first expression of an ongoing thorn in the side of the early church. Before beginning my remarks on this matter, it is necessary to say a few things about the religious environment of that time. **It was vastly different from the church culture of our day.**

⇒ A certain seriousness existed in the converted Jewish community concerning Divine requirements.

⇒ There was a level of Scriptural literacy among these people that is

commitment to the Lord.

The necessity for spiritual understanding, as opposed to a mere scholastic grasp of Scripture, can be seen in the matter before us: the binding of circumcision, as described by Moses, upon believers in Christ.

### The Origin of the Circumcision of Reference

#### Established Initially with Abraham

God instituted circumcision when He made a covenant with Abraham – a covenant made with the future in mind:

“As for Me, behold, My covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations . . . And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God”(Gen 17:4,7-8). This covenant has to do with Abraham and his seed, or progeny. It consisted primarily of two things. First, that God would be “a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee” (Gen 17:7). Second, that He would give them “all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession”(Gen 17:8).

12:3).

**Circumcision Required to Eat the Passover**

Circumcision was required for one to eat the Passover – even if he was a stranger in the land: “And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: **for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof**”(Ex 12:48).

**Distinguished the Jews from the Gentiles**

Circumcision became the means of distinguishing the Jews from the Gentiles. The Jews were referred to as

fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man”(John 7:22).

**Stephen Referred to Circumcision**

Stephen referred to it when he addressed the Jewish council: “And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs”(Acts 7:8).

**Paul Referred to Circumcision**

Paul also referred to it in his teaching: “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also”(Rom 4:11).

**Some Mitigating Factors**

There was no specific word contained in Moses and the Prophets that said the rite of circumcision would become obsolete, or by a decree of God would no longer be required. There were some indirect statements that spoke of another kind of circumcision.

⇒ **UNCIRCUMCIUSED LIPS.** “And Moses spake before the LORD, saying, Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of **uncircumcised lips**?” (Ex 6:12).

⇒ **CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART.** “**Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked**” (Deut 10:16). “And the LORD thy **God will circumcise thine heart . . .**” (Deut 30:6). “**Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart . . .**” (Jer 4:4). “Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: **for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart**”(Jer 9:26).

⇒ **UNCIRCUMCIUSED EARS.** “To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, **their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot**

**Circumcision became the means of distinguishing the Jews from the Gentiles. The Jews were referred to as “the circumcision,” or those who were “circumcised”**

**Those Who Were not Circumcised Were Punished**

In regards to this covenant, it was established by the rite of circumcision. “This is My covenant, which ye shall keep, between Me and you and thy seed after thee; **Every man child among you shall be circumcised.** And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt Me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed . . . **And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant**”(Gen 17:10-14).

**Codified and Bound Upon the People by Moses**

In the Law, circumcision was formally bound upon the people: “Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. **And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised**”(Lev

“the circumcision,” or those who were “circumcised”(Jer 9:25; Acts 10:45; 11:2; Rom 3:30; 4:9,12; 15:8; Gal 2:7-9; Eph 2:11; Col 4:11; Tit 1:10), and the Gentiles as “the uncircumcision” or “uncircumcised”(Gen 34:14; Judges 14:3; 15:18; 1 Sam 17:26; 1 Sam 31:4; Jer 9:26; Rom 3:30; 4:9; Eph 2:11).

**John the Baptist and Jesus Circumcised**

John the Baptist was circumcised in strict accord with this law. “And it came to pass, that **on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John**”(Luke 1:59-60). On the eighth day, he infant Jesus was circumcised according to this law: “**And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb**”(Luke 2:21).

**Jesus Referred to Circumcision**

Jesus referred to this rite: “Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the

hearken . . .”(Jer 6:10).

Although these statements may be clear to those in Christ who have understanding, **there was not a syllable of Scripture that suggested that a new circumcision would invalidate the old** – just as the New Covenant made the first old, and ready to vanish away (Heb 8:13). **That is something that would be made known in the crucible of disputation and reasoning.** It would also be revealed more fully to Paul, who would enlarge upon the reason why circumcision could not be bound upon believers.

#### WHY SAY THESE THINGS?

I have taken the time to point out these things to show the necessity of obtaining true wisdom and spiritual understanding. When these men came down from Judea and taught some that they could not be saved unless they were circumcised after the manner of Moses, their reasoning must have appeared to be very weighty. They could point out in Scripture that this is what God required. They could further have seemingly established that any Gentiles that were accepted by God had, in fact, become identified with the Jews, thus requiring their circumcision.

The prophets spoke of the coming identity of the Gentiles **with the Jews.**

- ⇒ “*And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and His rest shall be glorious*”(Isa 11:10).
- ⇒ “*I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give*

**These men from Judea did not simply say the Gentiles ought to be circumcised – that would have been bad enough. Now, however, they extend their reasoning into the area of salvation, which is administered by the Lord Jesus – something that neither Moses nor the prophets associated with circumcision.**

*thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles*”(Isa 42:6).

- ⇒ “*Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders*” (Isa 49:22).
- ⇒ “*The Gentiles shall come to thy light . . . the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee*”(Isa 60:3,5).
- ⇒ “*And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name*”(Isa 62:2).
- ⇒ “*O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit*” (Jer 16:19).
- ⇒ “*Thus saith the LORD of hosts: In those days it shall come to pass, that*

*ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you*” (Zech 8:23).

For that matter, the New Covenant was clearly prophesied as being made “*with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah*”(Jer 31:31).

#### WHAT THESE MEN SAID

These men from Judea did not simply say the Gentiles ought to be circumcised – that would have been bad enough. **Now, however, they extend their reasoning into the area of salvation, which is administered by the Lord Jesus** – something that neither Moses nor the prophets associated with circumcision. Supposing that their reasoning was sound, and no doubt buttressing their word with all manner of Scripture, they affirmed, “*Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved*” (Acts 15:1) – and they were talking about the salvation that is in Christ, for Moses promised no salvation under the Law. **They said this in the presence of the brethren in Antioch, among whom were several teachers and prophets.**

### PAUL AND BARNABAS DISPUTED WITH THEM

<sup>2</sup> ***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.***”

Here we are exposed to the manner in which doctrinal controversy was addressed by the early church. First, what was said to be **required** was taken seriously. Further, it was not assumed that because a person or persons felt what they said was true, that they were at liberty to bind it upon others. What

was preached was not left to human discretion. Further, what was questioned was not left in the domain of human opinion. **We will see that an aggressive effort was made to suppress error, and to arrive at a sound expression of the truth.**

This is not a common approach in

our time. There are matters of religious controversy that have existed for centuries, never being hammered out to a satisfactory conclusion, as in this text. For example, in the movement with which I have been identified, there is a line of teaching that states singing to God cannot be accompanied by a musical instrument. The division is sharp, extending into the reasoning of our text – associating the matter with salvation. Yet, for at least one hundred and fifty years, the controversy has continued **without** an uninterrupted quest for the matter to be resolved. There have been debates – such as the one Paul and Barnabas will have with these men from Judea. However, there has not been a determination such as the one recorded in this text. **I conclude that this record has to do with men who evidenced more interest in the truth, as opposed to maintaining a sectarian position.**

**NO SMALL DISSENSION AND DISPUTATION**

*“When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them . . .”* Other versions read, *“great dissension and debate,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“sharp dispute and debate,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“no small dissensions and questioning,”*<sup>ASV</sup> *“no little argument and discussion with them,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“no small measure of discord and dispute,”*<sup>CJB</sup> *“engaged them in serious argument and debate,”*<sup>CSB</sup> *“great dissension, and disputation,”*<sup>GWN</sup> *“had a major argument and debate with them,”*<sup>NET</sup> *“sharp dispute and debate with them,”*<sup>NIB</sup> *“had a long argument with these men,”*<sup>NJB</sup> *“disagreed with them, arguing vehemently,”*<sup>NLT</sup> *“argued and discussed this with them at length,”*<sup>LIVING</sup> *“were very much opposed to this teaching. They argued with these men about it,”*<sup>IE</sup> and *“dire disturbance and a serious discussion had been created.”*<sup>MONTGOMERY</sup>

PAUL AND BARNABAS RESPOND	
<p><b>DISSENSION</b> στάσις</p> <p>Strife, dissension; Heated quarrel, conflict; Dispute, argument, discord; To rise up in defiance with the presumed intention to overthrow.</p>	<p><b>DISPUTATION</b> ζητήσις</p> <p>Mutual questioning, disputation, discussion; Forceful expression of differences; heated debate; Express forceful differences of view.</p>

The words *“dissension”* and *“disputation”* are strong words. They are certainly not associated with any casual or passive activity. Here, they speak of a holy aggression. *“Dissension”* has to do with strong disagreement. **In this case, Paul and Barnabas not only were in disagreement concerning the teaching of circumcision brought down from Jerusalem, but refused to let it go unchallenged.**

*“Disputation”* relates to the **articulation** of that disagreement, and the presentation of strong arguments against what was being taught: namely, *“Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.”* This was an activity in which both sides presented justification for their view. It was apparently heated, though not driven by *“the wrath of man,”* which *“worketh not the righteousness of God”* (James 12:20). The prolonged and aggressive nature of this exchange is depicted by the words, *“no small dissension and disputation.”*

**While disputation is not a preferred activity for men of God, it is often a necessary one.** This is because of the nature of spiritual life. **First**, contradicting thoughts produce a kind of climate in which the fruit of righteousness is diminished – for *“the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace among those that make peace”* (James 3:18). **Second**, where there is doctrinal conflict there is error, for *“sound doctrine”* is never self-contradictory. This is because it issues forth from God, *“with whom is no variableness”* (James 1:17). **Third**, anything declared to be related to salvation is a critical matter, for no subject is of any greater importance than *“the salvation of God”* (Psa 50:23; Lk 3:6; Acts 28:28).

⇒ **RELATED TO GOD.** Anything and everything that relates to salvation also connects with God, who is appropriately described as *“the God of salvation”* (Psa 68:2).

⇒ **RELATED TO JESUS.** It also is associated with Jesus, who is *“the Captain”* of *“salvation”* (Heb 2:10).

⇒ **RELATED TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.** It also is united with the Holy Spirit,

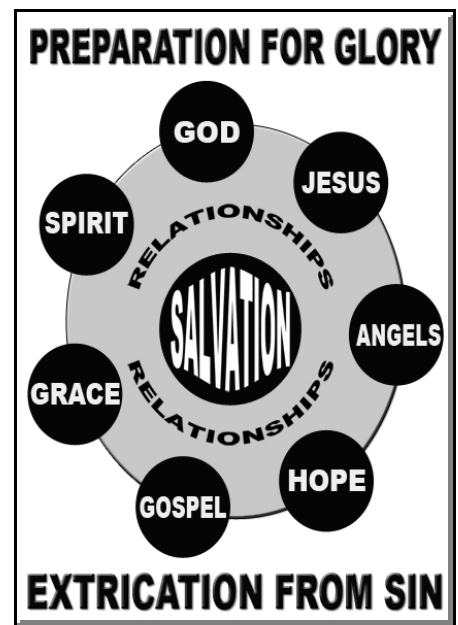
through whom salvation is implemented – through *“the sanction of the Spirit”* (1 Thess 2:13); and spiritual birth as well – being *“born of the Spirit”* (John 3:8).

⇒ **RELATED TO THE HOLY ANGELS.** Additionally anything having to do with salvation involves the holy angels, who are ministers to those who are *“the heirs of salvation”* (Heb 1:14).

⇒ **RELATED TO THE GRACE OF GOD.** On top of all of that, whatever is affiliated with salvation has to do with *“the grace of God,”* which *“brings salvation”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Tit 2:11).

⇒ **RELATED TO THE GOSPEL.** It also directly relates to the Gospel, which is God’s *“power unto salvation”* (Rom 1:16), and is the *“Gospel of your salvation”* (Eph 1:13).

⇒ **RELATED TO HOPE.** Things represented as being related to salvation also relate to hope, for saints possess *“the hope of salvation”* (1 Thess 5:8; Eph 6:17).



All of these relationships are critical to salvation itself. It is not possible that anything unrelated to them could be associated with salvation. As the **Architect of salvation, anything connected with that salvation must, of**

necessity come from God the Father. As the Implementer of salvation, everything inherent in that salvation must be administered by Jesus Christ. I find it exceedingly difficult to imagine anything having greater implications than something said to be associated with salvation. In this matter we are not speaking of a novel religious idea, or a unique doctrine of a particular church. This is not something in which men are allowed latitude for opinion. If all of

*“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we **must be saved**”* (Acts 4:12).

⇒ **CALLING UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD.** *“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord **shall be saved**”* (Acts 2:21). *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be*

⇒ **BY THE GOSPEL.** *“By which also **ye are saved**, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain”* (1 Cor 15:2).

⇒ **BY BAPTISM.** *“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now **save us** (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ”* (1 Pet 3:21).

⇒ **BY BELIEVING AND CONFESSION.** *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou **shalt be saved**”* (Rom 10:9).

⇒ **BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH.** *“For by grace **are ye saved** through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God”* (Eph 2:8).

⇒ **BY THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH.** *“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, **that they might be saved**”* (2 Thess 2:10).

⇒ **ACCORDING TO GOD’S MERCY, BY THE WASHING OF REGENERATION AND THE RENEWING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy **He saved us**, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost”* (Titus 3:5).

You can look at these as a series of sequential steps – but it ought to be apparent that no such view is declaring concerning them in Scripture. They may also simply be viewed as requirements that must all be met – and there certainly is some element of truth to that. However, it seems to me that the point being revealed in these matters is the marvelous complexity of salvation, and the consequent necessity for Divine involvement. It would be a blasphemous addition to accept what was being taught by certain men from Jerusalem: *“Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye **cannot** be saved.”* Such a statement cannot be blended with the revelations stated above. However these

**If all of heaven is involved in salvation, men do well to be sober and perceptive regarding anything they say pertains to that salvation. No person can afford to have distorted thoughts about the salvation of God.**

heaven is involved in salvation, men do well to be sober and perceptive regarding anything they say pertains to that salvation. No person can afford to have distorted thoughts about the salvation of God. If salvation has to do with the extrication of men from sin, reconciling them to God, and making them suitable to obtain an *“eternal inheritance”* (Heb 9:15), then our representations of it must be proper, reflecting *“the mind of the Lord.”*

Salvation must neither be oversimplified nor laden with requirements that did not originate with God. Ponder the things that have been associated with being *“saved.”*

⇒ **ENDURING TO THE END.** *“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end **shall be saved.**”* (Matt 10:22). *“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same **shall be saved**”* (Mat 24:13).

⇒ **BELIEVING AND BEING BAPTIZED.** *“He that believeth and is baptized **shall be saved**: but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:16).

⇒ **ENTERING BY JESUS.** *“I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he **shall be saved**, and shall go in and out, and find pasture”* (John 10:9).

⇒ **THROUGH THE NAME OF JESUS.**

*saved”* (Rom 10:13).

⇒ **THROUGH THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.** *“But we believe that through the grace of **the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved**, even as they”* (Acts 15:11). *“Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace **ye are saved**)”* (Eph 2:5).

⇒ **BELIEVING ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.** *“And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou **shalt be saved**, and thy house”* (Acts 16:31).

⇒ **BY THE PRESENT LIFE OF CHRIST.** *“Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we **shall be saved** from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we **shall be saved** by his life”* (Rom 5:9-10).

⇒ **BY THE FIRE OF DIVINE JUDGMENT.** *“If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself **shall be saved**; yet so as by fire”* (1 Cor 3:15).

⇒ **BY HOPE.** *“For **we are saved** by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?”* (Rom 8:24).

men were considering salvation, it was wholly unacceptable. It clashed with both the nature and purpose of salvation, and therefore Paul and Barnabas refused to allow such statements to go unchallenged. The statement of these men from Galilee betrayed their ignorance of the salvation of God. Left unchallenged, it would drive a wedge between the people and God.

**THEY DETERMINED TO**

“... they determined...” Other versions read, “the brethren determined,” NASB “appointed,” NIV “made a decision to,” BBE “the congregation assigned,” CJB “they arranged,” CSB “they ordained,” GENEVA and “it was decided.” NAB

The word “determined” is translated from a word meaning, “to appoint, ordain, order,” THAYER “to assign to a place or task, to decide,” FRIBERG and “designate, set aside, command, order, direct.” UBS

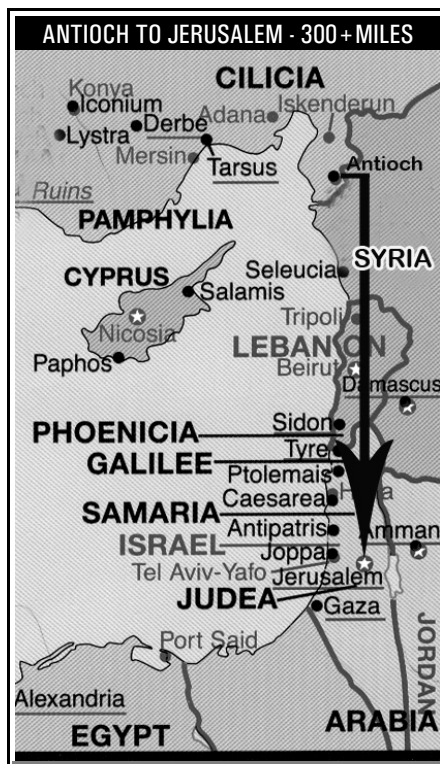
Here is another example of the need for discernment. A decision had to be made that did not allow for the present situation to continue, and yet the matter could not be resolved by the wisdom and arguments of those present. However, that was not sufficient reason to table the discussion for another time. I get the distinct impression that the work of the Lord could not move forward until unanimity on this matter regarding appropriating salvation was accomplished.

Also, we see how entrenched these men from Jerusalem were in their persuasion. Even after Paul and Barnabas had engaged them in a lengthy disputation – men who were called and directed by the Holy Spirit of God – yet the issue they were professing was not resolved.

However, the matter could not simply be dropped, while brethren agreed to speak only of those things on which they agreed – something that is advocated today among some who are sharply divided in what they relate to salvation. **Questionable teachings that are represented as being associated with salvation cannot be ignored, or left to the people to figure out.** Everything about salvation is built upon a sure foundation – one that can be embraced by faith.

Faith cannot take hold of doubt, for it is the antithesis of faith. Salvation by grace through faith cannot take place if faith is not grounded in Christ – and that grounding is wholly dependent upon the Word of God, particularly the Gospel.

One more thing about this: there appears to have been no threat to any of the brethren by the action that was taken. No one objected to sending Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem about this matter, as though it might uproot their tradition or void their preaching. Of course, when they obtained an answer, it would require the cessation of any teaching that contradicted it.



**SEND PAUL AND BARNABAS TO JERUSALEM**

“...that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them...”

They did not call for some supposedly unbiased person from outside of their group. Instead, they chose Paul and Barnabas, who had initially been with them for a “whole year” (Acts 11:26), and had remained with them for a “long time” after completing the mission to which the Spirit had called them (Acts 14:28). In addition they sent specific men

from their own number, or *some of the others of the number.* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Here, we get a feel concerning the caliber of brethren in the Antioch church. Luke has already related there were certain teachers and prophets in that assembly. Among them were “Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul” (Acts 13:1). It certainly is not a coincidence that “the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (11:26). They apparently projected a picture of total commitment to Christ, as well as thorough acquaintance with His teaching. Of course, it is not possible to firmly establish one’s identity with Christ if the people are neither committed to Him nor knowledgeable of His ways.

**TO JERUSALEM**

“... should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders...”

There are sixty references to Jerusalem in the book of Acts (1:4, 8,12,19; 2:5,14; 4:6,16; 5:16,28; 6:7; 8:1, 14,25,26,27; 9:2,13,21,26,28; 10:39; 11:2, 22,27; 12:25; 13:13,27,31; 15:2,4; 16:4; 18:21; 19:21; 20:16,22; 21:4,11,12,13,5, 17,31; 22:5,17,18; 23:11; 24:11; 25:1,3,7, 9,15,20,24; 26:4,10,20; 28:17). There were a number of prophecies regarding the centrality of Jerusalem during the inauguration of the New Covenant.

⇒ “And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD **from Jerusalem**” (Isa 2:3).

⇒ “For **out of Jerusalem** shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this” (Isa 37:32).

⇒ “The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them: and **I will give to Jerusalem** one that bringeth good tidings” (Isa 41:27).

⇒ “That confirmeth the word of His

servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers: **that saith to Jerusalem**. Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof” (Isa 44:26).

- ⇒ “At that time **they shall call Jerusalem** the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart” (Jer 3:17).
- ⇒ “The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel” (Joel 3:16).
- ⇒ “And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice **from Jerusalem**; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither” (Amos 1:2).
- ⇒ “And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD **from Jerusalem**” (Micah 4:2).
- ⇒ “And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out **from Jerusalem**: half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be” (Zech 14:8).

**ABOUT THIS QUESTION**

“... about this question.” Other versions read, “concerning this issue,”<sup>NASB</sup> “to discuss this question,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “concerning this controversy,”<sup>CSB</sup> “about this claim,”<sup>GWN</sup> “about this point of disagreement,”<sup>NET</sup> and “on this matter.”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup>

The question was whether or not a person could be saved without being circumcised “after the manner of Moses,” or in strict accord with the ordinance of the Law. According to that ordinance, male children within Israel, whether born of an Israelite or a stranger, were to

be circumcised on the eighth day following their birth (Lev 12:3). Strangers sojourning with the Israelites had to be circumcised in order to partake of the Passover (Ex 12:48). So far as procedures are concerned, that is the extent of Moses’ instruction on circumcision.

- ⇒ In all of the Law (Exodus through Deuteronomy), there are only six uses of the word circumcision in its various forms (circumcise—Deut 10:16; 30:6; circumcised – Ex 12:44,48; Lev 12:3; circumcision—Ex 4:26).
- ⇒ Circumcision is referenced fifteen times in Genesis (17:10,11,12,13,14, 23,24,25,26,27; 21:4; 34:15,17,22,24).
- ⇒ It is mentioned five times from Joshua through the Song of Solomon (Josh 5:2,3,4,5,6,7,8).
- ⇒ It is mentioned in the Prophets (Isaiah through Malachi) two times (Jer 4:4; 9:25).
- ⇒ There are thirty-four references to “uncircumcised” and “circumcised” – thirty-four times from Genesis through Ezekiel (Gen 17:14; 34:14; Ex 6:12,30; 12:48; Lev 19:13; 26:41; Josh 5:7; Judges 14:3; 15:18; 1 Sam 14:6; 17:26,36; 31:4; 2 Sam 1:20; 1 Chron 10:4; Isa 52:1; Jer 6:10; 9:25,26; Ezek 28:10; 31:18; 32:19,21,24,25,26,27,28, 29,30,32; 44:7,9).

On the surface, that does not appear to be enough to formulate a teaching such as, “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” Yet, the strength of what was said is seen in words that God delivered to Abraham concerning this ordinance.

- ⇒ **A COVENANT TO BE KEPT.** “**This is My covenant, which ye shall keep, between Me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised**” (Gen 17:10).
- ⇒ **A TOKEN OF THE COVENANT.** “**And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt Me and you**” (Gen 17:11).
- ⇒ **A COVENANT IN THEIR FLESH.** “**He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant**” (Gen 17:13).
- ⇒ **THE PENALTY FOR NOT BEING CIRCUMCISED.** “**And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken My covenant**” (Gen 17:14).

Without the further illumination that would accompany the day of salvation, these texts, combined with the few given by Moses, were all the people had. They all presumed the prominence of Abraham’s offspring, and the necessity of anyone seeking an association with God being identified with them.

The “question” that had to be resolved was whether or not the Gentiles had to be circumcised to be saved. It could not be resolved with an existing text of Scripture. Further, they did not pray for an answer – at least there is no record of them doing so. The matter would have to be resolved through the consideration of men who had a fuller understanding of the nature of life in

**Without the further illumination that would accompany the day of salvation, these texts, combined with the few given by Moses, were all the people had. They all presumed the prominence of Abraham’s offspring, and the necessity of anyone seeking an association with God being identified with them.**

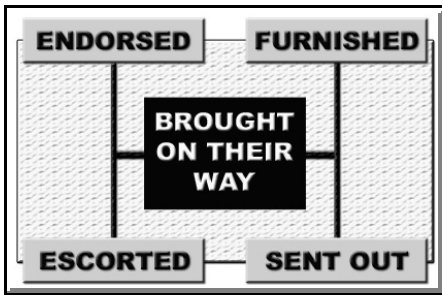
Christ Jesus, together with those who had been, according to His own selection, personally involved in the work

of God. It appears that those who presented this teaching submitted to the determination to resolve the issue. Thus

the stage is set for the determined resolution of this controversy about circumcision.

**THEY WERE BROUGHT ON THEIR WAY AND DECLARED THE CONVERSION OF THE GENTILES**

*“<sup>3</sup> 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.”*



**BROUGHT ON THEIR WAY**

*“And being brought on their way by the church . . .”* Other versions read, *“sent on their way,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“sent off by the congregation,”* <sup>CJB</sup> *“sent on their journey,”* <sup>NAB</sup> *“members of the church saw them off,”* <sup>NJB</sup> *“having been sent forward,”* <sup>YLT</sup> *“the entire congregation escorted them out of the city,”* <sup>LIVING</sup> *“helped the men with what they needed,”* <sup>IE</sup> *“accompanied for a short distance by some other members,”* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> *“they were endorsed and sent,”* <sup>ISV</sup> and *“being fitted out and sent on their way by the church.”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The words *“brought on their way”* are translated from a single Greek word (προπεμφθέντες). This word has a complex meaning, portions of which are reflected in the various translations. Lexically the word can mean, *“accompany, escort . . . help on one’s journey, send on one’s way,”* <sup>THAYER</sup> and *“as furnishing things necessary for someone’s travel help on one’s journey, send on one’s way.”* <sup>FRIBERG</sup>

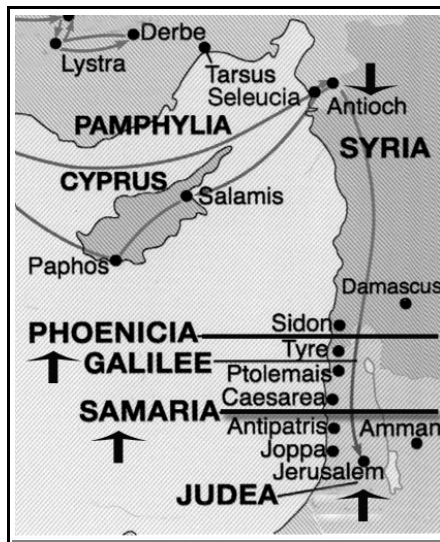
The idea here is that the whole congregation was involved in this matter, confirming their interest in doctrinal purity and a proper representation of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. They all agreed concerning the ones who were selected for the journey. They no doubt supplied what

was required to make the trip, which was by land, and would require some time. They also escorted them, probably to the outskirts of the city, perhaps accompanying them for a for a short while.

Here we see the unanimity that existed among the brethren at Antioch. One could hardly conceive of a contemporary church taking that much interest in the resolution of a doctrinal matter. Could you, for example, imagine staff members like youth ministers, senior ministers, family ministers, counselors, and praise team members being part of the activities of our text? Of course, those type of positions are not mentioned in the chronicles of the early church. Their interest was quite different than those that are fostered by the institutional church. **I mention these things to accent the glaring difference between the church set forth in the book of Acts, and what has come to be known as “the church” of our time.**

**THEY PASSED THROUGH PHENICE AND SAMARIA**

*“ . . . they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles . . .”*



*“Phenice”* is the same as Phoenicia, being an older way of English spelling. This was a region comprising parts of southern Syria and northern Palestine. Brethren who were scattered by *“the persecution that arose about Stephen”* had traveled to this region *“preaching the word to none but the Jews only”* (Acts 11:19). The cities of Tyre and Sidon were in that region. Samaria was the central region of Canaan. Traveling by land, Paul, Barnabas, and company passed through these regions en route to Jerusalem – a trip of around three hundred miles.

**Declaring the Conversion of the Gentiles**

Other versions read, *“describing the conversion,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“describing in detail the conversion,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“how the Gentiles had been converted,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“reported the conversion,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> *“giving news of the salvation of,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“recounting in detail how the Gentiles had turned to God,”* <sup>CJB</sup> *“relating the conversion,”* <sup>DARBY</sup> and *“how non-Jewish people were turning to God.”* <sup>GWN</sup>

Conversion has to do with turning from one manner of living to another, abandoning one kind of life in order to embrace another. To be converted means to *“turn toward, turning about,”* <sup>FRIBERG</sup> and *“to come to believe, to come to accept.”* <sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> **It speaks of change – a moral change that**

involves the heart, mind, words, and deeds. It is a thorough change that is bounded by death to sin on the one side and coming alive to God on the other. Going through Phenicia and Samaria, the travelers told of the conversion of the Gentiles, obviously reporting it to the believers in those areas.

Since the psychiatrists and psychologists, together with their band of counselors, have invaded the church,

made all the brothers glad,"<sup>NIV</sup> "created great joy,"<sup>CSB</sup> "this news was received with the great satisfaction,"<sup>NJB</sup> "This made all the brothers very happy,"<sup>IE</sup> "inspired all the brethren with great joy,"<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and "all the brothers were overjoyed to hear about it."<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Passing through the areas of Phenice and Samaria, the company of travelers reported the works of the Lord to the people of God – "the brethren."The

Behold the unity of the brethren in those areas. Truly, they were "of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32). They all rejoiced because they knew, "This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psa 118:23). Here is an example of the brethren being "of one mind and of one judgment" (1 Cor 1:10), and dwelling "together in unity" (Psa 133:1-3). Of course, the implications of this must have had a powerful effect upon the travelers, for it related directly to the issue that mandated their trip to Jerusalem. While some men were dickering about binding circumcision on Gentile converts, these brethren were reporting their conversion – which certainly implied their acceptance by God. One would have a great deal of difficulty supporting the notion that people could be converted, turning to the Lord, and yet fall short in meeting the requirements. The very posture of turning to the Lord puts the individual in a state in which a favorable response to the Lord is assured. Looking to the Lord brings spiritual aptitude.

There are no examples in Scripture of people who turned to the Lord, yet refused to do what He required of them. The other alternative would be that Paul; and Barnabas had not instructed them properly. Of course, if that was the case, how could they have been converted, for conversion does not come through a flawed presentation of the Gospel. The brethren who heard the report knew this, and so they had "great joy." They did not inquire whether or not they had been circumcised, or if they knew they had to be circumcised to be saved. They were able to think more soundly.

**Since the psychiatrists and psychologists, together with their band of counselors, have invaded the church, there are fewer reports of conversion. Now people are being taught to manage sin instead of turn from it and die to it. The are being led to struggle with sin by regimen, rather than gaining the victory over it by sinning "no more."**

there are fewer reports of conversion. Now people are being taught to manage sin instead of turn from it and die to it. The are being led to struggle with sin by regimen, rather than gaining the victory over it by sinning "no more." Group therapy and personal counseling have now upstaged preaching, admonition, exhortation, and edification. Such human impositions were not in place during the time of our text. Preaching and teaching was being done, and conversions were the result.

#### THEY CAUSED GREAT JOY

"... and they caused great joy unto all the brethren." Other versions read, "were bringing joy,"<sup>NASB</sup> "this news

text does not say they reported how they were on their way to Jerusalem to settle the question about circumcision. They would address that problem, to be sure, but it had not consumed their minds, nor was it something that would cause joy among the brethren.

The text affirms "they caused great joy unto all the brethren." That is, they "caused" it by "declaring the conversion of the Gentiles" – how they had turned to the Lord. It was the posture of the Gentiles toward the Lord that constituted their conversion, and that is what caused all of the brethren to be glad. It is what they said, or reported, not what they did.

## THE BRETHREN IN JERUSALEM RECEIVED THEM

**"<sup>4</sup> 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."**

We do not know how long it took Paul, Barnabas, and those with them to get to Jerusalem – particularly since they reported to the brethren along the way. If

they traveled by sea, there were coastal cities in Phenice and Samaria where they could have disembarked (Sodom, Tyre, Caesarea, and Joppa). The language "passed through Phenice and Samaria," however, strongly suggests that they traveled on the land. Now, at length, they arrive. It is quite possible that no advance message was sent to the brethren in Jerusalem, notifying them

that they were coming.

#### THEY WERE RECEIVED OF THE CHURCH, APOSTLES, AND ELDERS

"And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders..." Other versions read, "they were welcomed,"<sup>NIV</sup> "they had a meeting with,"

BBE *“they met with,”* LIVING *“were cordially received,”* WEYMOUTH and *“were heartily welcomed.”* AMPLIFIED

The word translated *“received”* has the following lexical meaning: *“to grant one access to oneself in the capacity in which he wishes to be regarded, e. g. as the messenger of others.”* THAYER and *“as understanding and receiving a message favorably receive, accept.”* FRIBERG The idea here is that **they were received in the capacity in which they had been sent** – to discuss the matter of whether or not circumcision was compulsory for one to be saved. In other words, the whole church generally, and the apostles and elders specifically, agreed to deal with this matter.



The picture here is **not** one of the whole church in Jerusalem, together with the apostles and elders and the brethren with Paul and Barnabas, meeting together to decide the matter at hand by consensus. **This was not a subject for general discussion.** The question of the necessity of circumcision in order to be saved was taken up with the *“apostles and elders.”* The principle contributors in the discussion from those in Antioch would come from Paul and Barnabas. It is possible that some of the prophets from Antioch participated also, although that is open to question. It is certain that the men who came from Judea and disseminated the doctrine in question were not with those coming from Antioch. Those accompanying Paul and Barnabas are said to have been of the number of brethren in Antioch (15:2).

Now we will have a circumstance described in First Corinthians. Things

will be uttered by the few, yet all will learn. As it is written, *“Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets”* (1 Cor 14:29-32). **This is a matter that will impact directly on how brethren among the Gentiles will be taught.** The issue must be decided by those with understanding, who have participated in the work of the Lord by Divine appointment.

### The Elders

This is only the second time *“the elders”* at Jerusalem have been mentioned in the book of Acts. The first time we read of them is when the churches sent relief to the brethren in Jerusalem by the hands of Barnabas and Saul, sending it *“to the elders”* (11:30). Now, however, *“the elders”* in Jerusalem are joined with the apostles in the determination of a critical matter. Here we read that they joined in the welcoming of the group from Antioch in the capacity in which they had been sent. Verse six informs us that they came together with the apostles to consider the matter at hand. Verses twenty-two and twenty-three finds them joining with the apostles in sending letters of instruction to the Gentile churches.

We have very little information on *“the elders”* in Jerusalem – only that they were capable of dealing with critical issues, and were prominent in the church. I gather that they were, as indicated by the instructions concerning elders, competent spiritual men, noted for their understanding of the mysteries of the Kingdom, and able to exhort and convince the gainsayers (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9; James 5:14-15; 1 Pet 5:1-5).

### THEY DECLARED ALL THINGS

*“... and they declared all things”* Other versions read, *“reported all things,”* NKJV *“reported everything,”* NIV *“rehearsed all things,”* ASV *“related all,”* DARBY *“declaring how great things,”* DOUAY *“recounted all,”* MRD *“gave an account of all,”* NJB and *“told about all the things.”* IE

The account was given by Paul

and Barnabas, and related to the mission to which the Spirit had called them, and which they fulfilled (13:2; 14:26). It was the same report they had given to the brethren in Phenice and Samaria, except more in detail. They reported **all** of the particulars of their work, like Peter reported the events that took place at the house of Cornelius (11:4-17). I gather that they, like Peter, commenced with their calling, then related all that was involved in the fulfilling of that call.

### GOD HAD DONE WITH THEM

*“... that God had done with them.”* Other versions read, *“that God had done through them,”* NIV *“that God had wrought with them,”* DARBY *“that God had wrought by them,”* MRD *“God had done by them,”* TNT *“as many things as God did with them,”* YLT *“what God had been doing through their ministry,”* LIVING *“all that God, working with them, had done,”* WEYMOUTH *“what God had done through them as instruments,”* WILLIAMS *“all that God had accomplished through them,”* AMPLIFIED and *“how greatly God had worked with them.”* PHILLIPS

The nature of this report is to be duly noted. It was not a mere relating of chronological events, or the various experiences they had. **The point of the account was not what they had done, but what God had done through them.** Now, that does require some discernment. These days, there are a lot of things being reported as coming from God that, in fact, have had their origin with men. I do not doubt that those endowed with understanding weighed what was being reported, as Paul enjoined the prophets to do in Corinth (1 Cor 14:29).

**It is understood that God always acts in strict harmony with both His character and His Word.** It is, however, necessary that such a correlation be discerned. Therefore, the report of things God had wrought, or accomplished, through Paul and Barnabas must yield apparent glory to God. This will be attested in the results that were yielded by what they did. The effects of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas will be reported – effects that God alone could work. I do not doubt they were very conscious of how godly men would reason on their report, and whether or not they would conclude that God was at work.

**THE ACCOUNT IN GALATIANS**

Paul alludes to this gathering in his letter to the Galatians. He states there that he went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and that Titus went with him also. He also states this was “by revelation,” which confirms the

determination of the brethren in Antioch was by the Lord, and not merely by men. Here is what Paul recorded. “Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them

that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain” (Gal 2:1-2). It is evident that much took place during this epochal gathering. It is on the part of wisdom to carefully examine it.

**CERTAIN SAID THEY SHOULD BE CIRCUMCISED AND KEEP THE LAW OF MOSES**

***“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.”***

During this report, “the whole church”<sup>NLT</sup> was in the assembly, together with the apostles and elders, and Paul, Barnabas, and certain brethren from Antioch who were with them. The conclusions of this assembly will have an effect on the entire body of Christ, both in Jerusalem and wherever the Gospel was believed and obeyed. Now we find that everyone in the assembly did not have the same understanding. However, it is imperative that they work toward this objective, which thing God requires (1 Cor 1:10).

**CERTAIN OF THE SECT OF THE PHARISEES**

*“But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed . . .”* Other versions read, “believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees,”<sup>NIV</sup> “believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “some of the Pharisees, who were of the faith,”<sup>BBE</sup> “certain members of the Pharisees’ party who had become believers objected,”<sup>NJB</sup> “some of the men who had been Pharisees before their conversion stood to their feet,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “Some of the believers had belonged to the Pharisee sect. They stood up and claimed,”<sup>IE</sup> “certain men who had belonged to the sect of the Pharisees but were now believers,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and “some who believed [who acknowledged Jesus as their Savior and devoted themselves to Him] belonged to the sect of the Pharisees.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

This phrase does not suggest that the men who objected were still

Pharisees, maintaining that position in the Jewish community. It rather is intended to identify their background. In the past they were “of the sect of the Pharisees.” Luke states that “the church” welcomed the group from Antioch. This was not a public gathering that could be attended by those who were

with everything that he had (Phil 3:7-14). That, of course, is a frame of mind that proves very difficult for many professed believers.

**IT WAS NEEDFUL**

*“ . . . saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command*

**Here were men who came from the same background as Paul, yet had not made the same progress. Later we will find that these men “held their peace,” and were finally “pleased” with the decision of the apostles and elders (15:13,22). Yet, at the point of our text, these men still held on to views that truth would eventually show to be erroneous.**

not members of the body of Christ.

**Here were men who came from the same background as Paul, yet had not made the same progress.** Later we will find that these men “held their peace,” and were finally “pleased” with the decision of the apostles and elders (15:13,22). Yet, at the point of our text, these men still held on to views that truth would eventually show to be erroneous. Those who have been under the grip of religious tradition often find it clinging to them. Paul is an example that confirms such restraint is **not** necessary. Of course, he also was characterized by driving compulsion to “forget” the things behind him, count everything loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, and press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus

*them to keep the law of Moses.”* Other versions read, “it is necessary . . . and to direct”<sup>NKJV</sup> “the Gentiles must be and required,”<sup>NIV</sup> “it is necessary . . . and ordered,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “it is necessary . . . and to charge,”<sup>RSV</sup> “they ought to . . . and enjoin them,”<sup>DARBY</sup> and “insisting that Gentiles should . . . and instructed to.”<sup>NJB</sup>

First, there are things that ARE “needful.” Speaking of giving attendance to what He Himself said, Jesus said “one thing is needful” (Lk 10:42). In view of the situation existing in his time, Jude said it was “needful” for him to exhort the brethren to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 1:3). Paul and Barnabas said it was “necessary” to preach the word of God to the Jews first (Acts 13:46). In the very conference covered in this text, the apostles and elders will conclude that

**It is as though these men were responding to the report of Paul and Barnabas, declaring that something more was required of those who had believed their message and obeyed the Gospel.**

there were “*necessary things*” that must be followed by Gentile believers (15:28). There are also certain things that are to be “*kept*.” Among them are “*the faith*” (2 Tim 4:7), the memory of the Gospel (1 Cor 15:2), “*the unity of the Spirit*” (Eph 4:3), “*purity*” (1 Tim 5:22), a condition in which we are “*unspotted from the world*” (James 1:27), and “*His commandments*”

(1 John 2:3; 3:22). However, none of the things that are to be “*kept*” or “*commanded*” can be originated by men. All such things must clearly be required by the Lord Himself, who is the “*Head of the body, the church*” (Col 1:18).

Now, these believers, who had come from “*the sect of the Pharisees,*”

which was the most strict sect of all the Jews (Acts 26:5), affirmed that it was essential for Gentiles to be circumcised, and to keep the Law of Moses. It is as though these men were responding to the report of Paul and Barnabas, declaring that something more was required of those who had believed their message and obeyed the Gospel.

Now, we will see how the apostles and elders respond to the affirmation of these believers who had been Pharisees. Will they treat the matter casually, or allow for the brethren to hold various opinions of it? Will they break forth in argument, or will they “*try the spirits*” to see if they are of God?

## THE APOSTLES AND ELDERS CAME TOGETHER TO CONSIDER THE MATTER

*“ 6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.”*

Immediately, the statement of those insisting that circumcision and keeping the law of Moses was required for the Gentiles, was put under scrutiny. The matter will not be left in a state of intellectual limbo, nor will every person be allowed the privilege of a private opinion on the matter. Things that are said to be “*necessary,*” and bound upon other believers must be examined, and a valid determination made concerning their propriety. No person, regardless of their acumen or devotion will be allowed to dictate to the body of Christ. Absolute requirements must be justified by both Scripture and sound reasoning. In this case, there will be an emphasis on reasoning, and arriving at a proper conclusion. That conclusion must also be

perceived by those with discernment, and the appropriate action be taken.

### THE APOSTLES AND ELDERS

*“And the apostles and elders came together . . .”* Other versions read, “*came together,*” <sup>NASB</sup> “*met,*” “*were gathered together,*” <sup>RSV</sup> “*came together,*” <sup>BBE</sup> “*assembled,*” <sup>CSB</sup> “*met together,*” <sup>NLT</sup> “*set a further meeting,*” <sup>LIVING</sup> and “*were assembled together.*” <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

We know that the apostles and elders were not isolated in this meeting. Verse twelve states that a “*multitude*” was present. It is also written that this multitude listened to the testimony of Paul and Barnabas during the gathering (15:12). Verse twenty-two refers to those present as “*the apostles and elders, with the whole church.*” The focus of this gathering, however, were the apostles and elders.

### TO CONSIDER THE MATTER

*“ . . . for to consider of this matter.”* Other versions read, “*to look into this matter,*” <sup>NASB</sup> “*consider this question,*” “*to consider this matter,*” <sup>RSV</sup> “*gave thought to the question,*” <sup>BBE</sup> “*to resolve this issue,*” <sup>NLT</sup> “*to decide this question,*” <sup>LIVING</sup> “*to study this problem,*” <sup>IE</sup> and “*to look into and consider this matter.*” <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

It is evident that there was a determination to resolve the issue, not merely review it with no decisive action. Was circumcision necessary for Gentile believers or not? Were they required to keep the Law of Moses or not? Some had said these things were necessary, and some disagreed. Now they will engage in an extensive dialog in the matter. They will bring things that are known to bear upon things that are not known. They will listen, weigh, and consider.

## AFTER MUCH DISPUTING, PETER ROSE UP AND SPOKE

*“ 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 men do not know one another after the flesh (2 Cor 5:16), and have a prevailing love of the truth (2 Thess 2:10), they can have profitable

disputation. Such is the case in this text. It provides us a slice of life in Christ that is not the most pleasant, and yet yields great benefit.

### MUCH DISPUTING

*“And when there had been much disputing . . .”* Other versions read, *“much debate,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“much discussion,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“much questioning,”*<sup>ASV</sup> *“lengthy debate,”*<sup>CJB</sup> *“a long discussion,”*<sup>NJB</sup> and *“an exhaustive inquiry.”*<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

The word *“disputing”* is translated from a word meaning, “questioning, disputation, discussion,”<sup>THAYER</sup> “heated discussion, debate, dispute,”<sup>FRIBERG</sup> “argument,”<sup>UBS</sup> and “to express forceful differences of opinion without necessarily having a presumed goal of seeking a solution - to dispute, dispute.”<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup>

The picture here is not that of two opposing parties trying to prove their preconceived notions. **Rather, it is of men of understanding making an effort to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion concerning something considered to be critical.** There is a difference in two contradicting parties trying to overturn the arguments of the other, and two parties of differing views attempting to arrive at the truth. The latter is what we have here. Where there are religious men who lack thoughtful convictions, such a discussion rarely takes place. In fact, some make every effort to avoid such an occasion, compromising their stance to avoid controversy. Under normal circumstances, and where there are issues at stake that are matters of conscience, this might be appropriate. **However, when it comes to matters related to being “saved,” to things that are “needful,” and to commandments that are to be kept, varying views cannot be maintained.** Such issues must be settled in order that inappropriate demands are not placed upon the people of God.

Therefore, our text speaks of an extended period of disputation. Yet, some additional testimony was required from those who actually had been involved in the conversion of Gentiles. Now, our attention is turned to such people.

#### PETER RISES UP TO SPEAK

*“Peter rose up, and said unto them . . .”* Other versions read, *“Peter stood up and said,”*<sup>NASB</sup> and *“Peter got up and addressed them.”*<sup>NIV</sup>

This is the man to whom Jesus said, *“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and*

*whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”* (Matt 16:19). This means that in matters relating to salvation and entrance into the Kingdom of God, Peter had superior understanding, coupled with the ability to articulate Divine requirements.

**However, when Peter speaks, he will not draw attention to his authority,**

**However, when Peter speaks, he will not draw attention to his authority, but to what God did through him. He knows that God cannot conduct Himself in contradiction of His nature or His Word, and therefore he will report what the Lord did following Peter’s preaching.**

**but to what God did through him.** He knows that God cannot conduct Himself in contradiction of His nature or His Word, and therefore he will report what the Lord did following Peter’s preaching.

#### GOD MADE CHOICE AMONG US

*“ . . . Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us . . .”* Other versions read, *“God chose among us,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“God made a choice among you,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“it was God’s pleasure,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“among us God chose out,”*<sup>GENEVA</sup> *“God made His choice,”*<sup>NAB</sup> and *“God made a choice or selection.”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

When it comes to the instruction or teaching of the people of God, the matter is not left to mere human choice. This is something that is very obvious in the Scriptural record.

⇒ God chose Moses to be the man through whom He gave the Law (Ex 24:12; Deut 5:1-3; John 1:17).

⇒ God chose the priesthood to teach the people to differentiate between good and evil (Lev 10:8-11).

⇒ God raised up Judges to deliver and teach the people (Judges 2:16,18).

⇒ All of the prophets were chosen by God, and given a message to proclaim (2 Chron 24:19; Jer 7:25; Zech 7:12; Heb 11:1).

⇒ All of the apostles were chosen and sent by the Lord (Lk 6:13; Eph 3:5).

⇒ The instructive ministries are set first in the church, as it has pleased God: apostles, prophets, and teachers (1 Cor 12:18,28).

⇒ Those with teaching and declaring ministries are gifts given to the church by Jesus: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers (Eph 4:11).

⇒ Elders are said to be made overseers by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28).

⇒ Those who preach the Gospel are “sent” by the Lord (Rom 10:15).

**Even within the framework of these called and appointed people, God decides which ones will be used for pivotal ministries.** Generally speaking, the twelve apostles were sent, but not limited, to the circumcision, or the Jews (Matt 19:28; Gal 2:7). Now, Peter will declare that God had chosen him for a special task. Earlier in this book we learned that the Holy Spirit separated Barnabas and Saul for a special work (13:2).

#### THE GENTILES SHOULD HEAR AND BELIEVE

*“ . . . that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.”*

What is here referred to as hearing the word of the Gospel and

believing is also referred to as God granting repentance unto life to the Gentiles (Acts 11:18).

The reference is to the house of Cornelius believing the Gospel as preached to them through Peter. **Peter now states that this was the result of a Divine choice.** First, the Lord directed the Gentile Cornelius to send for Peter, who would tell him words whereby he would be saved (Acts 10:1-6). Second, an angel was sent to Peter to instruct him of the correctness of preaching to the Gentiles, and to direct him to go with the men sent from Cornelius to his house (Acts 10:9-

23). The desire to summon Peter to his house did not originate with Cornelius – it was a revelation. The desire to go with the messengers from Cornelius, and preach to his household did not originate with Peter – it was a revelation. **Had the Lord not orchestrated that whole event, it is doubtful that either man would ever have been aware of the other one.** Peter’s explanation of the whole incident was this: *“God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.”*<sup>NASB</sup>

Because this was an event managed from heaven, the outcome of it

will be critical to beholding the will of the Lord concerning the Gentiles. Whatever Peter preached is what the Lord intended for him to say, for God spoke by his *“mouth.”* If circumcision is essential, Peter will say that it is, for he had the keys to the Kingdom.

Furthermore, his words were directly related to salvation itself – words, the angel told Cornelius, *“whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved”* (Acts 11:14). Peter’s personal testimony, therefore, is pertinent to the discussion at hand, having to do with the appropriation of salvation.

## THE GENTILES RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT EVEN AS THE DISCIPLES

*“<sup>8</sup> And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us.”*

Because the matter under

actual account of the event, the rehearsal of it to the brethren in Jerusalem, and in our text, he said nothing concerning **circumcision at that time.** Yet, God Himself responded in a way that

**As confirmed in the actual account of the event, the rehearsal of it to the brethren in Jerusalem, and in our text, he said nothing concerning circumcision at that time. Yet, God Himself responded in a way that dissolves all doubt about whether or not a person is required to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved.**

consideration had to do with salvation, the work of God as well as the Word of God must be brought to bare upon it. Peter will relate an event common to the church in Jerusalem, for several years earlier he had reported it in detail to them – and it was then recognized to have been an example of God granting people repentance *“unto life,”* which equates to *“repentance to salvation”* (Acts 11:18; 2 Cor 7:10). Furthermore, the message that was delivered to the house of Cornelius is described as *“words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved”* (Acts 11:14). **As confirmed in the**

dissolves all doubt about whether or not a person is required to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved.

### GOD, WHO KNOWS THE HEARTS

*“And God, which knoweth the hearts . . .”* Other versions read, *“knows the heart,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“knows the human heart,”*<sup>NRSV</sup> *“the searcher of hearts,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“the heart-knowing God,”*<sup>DARBY</sup> *“knows everyone’s thoughts,”*<sup>GWN</sup> *“knoweth what is in hearts,”*<sup>MRD</sup> *“knows people’s hearts,”*<sup>NLT</sup> and *“Who is acquainted with and understands the heart.”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

One of the invariable traits of the Lord is that He looks on the hearts of men – the citadel of their persons. Here, men are seen for what they are, and the eye of the Lord discovers it. How frequently the Holy Spirit makes a point of this.

⇒ *“ . . . for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart”* (1 Sam 16:7).

⇒ *“ . . . give to every man according to his ways, whose heart Thou knowest: (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men)”* (1 Kgs 8:39).

⇒ *“ . . . for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever”* (1 Chron 28:9).

⇒ *“I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness . . .”* (1 Chr 29:17).

⇒ *“Shall not God search this out? for He knoweth the secrets of the heart”* (Psa 44:21).

⇒ *“But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart. . .”* (Jer 11:20).

⇒ *“I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings”* (Jer 17:10).

⇒ *“But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart . . .”* (Jer 20:12).

⇒ *“. . . Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do”* (Heb 4:13).

How will the God of heaven, who knows all things, and particular the heart of man, respond to people believing a message that does NOT impose circumcision upon them? There were some among the brethren in Jerusalem, formerly Pharisees, who declared it was necessary for believing Gentiles to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. Certain men from Judaea had gone to Antioch and confidently declared, *“Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved”* (Acts 15:1). Will God confirm that this requirement reflects His mind? Will He stand behind such a declaration? Will He save a person who believes the Gospel, even though they are not circumcised? **If He will, then the statement cannot possibly be true!**

Now, the things that took place at the house of Cornelius have proved controversial in some circles, for it is most difficult to fit the Divine response into a stereotyped theology. However, we must not allow ourselves to be confused on the matter. **This is an account that relates to salvation, for that was the subject under consideration** – whether or not circumcision and the keeping of the Law of Moses was necessary to be saved.

**GOD BARE THEM WITNESS**

*“bare them witness . . .”* Other versions read, *“God . . . acknowledging them,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“God . . . showed that He accepted them,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“God . . . testified to them,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> *“God . . . gave testimony,”* <sup>DOUAY</sup> *“showed that He approved of people who aren’t Jewish,”* <sup>GWN</sup> *“showed His approval of them,”* <sup>NJB</sup> *“confirmed that He accepts Gentiles,”* <sup>NLT</sup> *“confirmed the fact that He accepts Gentiles,”* <sup>LIVING</sup> *“He accepted these non-Jewish people,”* <sup>IE</sup> *“showed them He approved,”* <sup>ISV</sup> *“gave this testimony in their*

*behalf,”* <sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> and *“has plainly shown that this is so, for when He had cleansed their hearts though their faith.”* <sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

The phrase *“bare them witness,”* means that God set His mark of approval upon those hearing the Word at Cornelius’ house. He confirmed their hearts were right, that they had unreservedly received the Gospel, and that He had received them. The confirmation was necessary for Peter and those who were with him, for this was the first group of pure Gentiles that were saved. Although the Samaritans had also believed the Gospel, they were a mixed race, and not Gentile proselytes like those present at Cornelius’ house.

These people were accepted, and that without being circumcised or keeping the Law of Moses.

**HOW GOD BORE THEM WITNESS?**

*“. . . giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us.”*

**Not only is Peter relating what God did at the house of Cornelius, he is showing its relevance to the matter of salvation.** He will, by inspiration,

*the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles.”* <sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

This is language that is common to all who are in Christ Jesus – **God gives them the Holy Spirit.**

⇒ *“And hope maketh not ashamed: because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us”* (Rom 5:5).

⇒ *“Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts”* (2 Cor 1:22).

⇒ *“Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit”* (2 Cor 5:5).

⇒ *“He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit”* (1 Thess 4:8).

⇒ *“And he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us”* (1 John 3:24).

**Not a single one of these texts is referring to some miraculous enduement, or to an experience that is unique to only some of the saved. And, indeed, if that was the case, the whole incident would have had no relevance to the matter being disputed in Jerusalem.**

interpret what took place there. He will not speak of the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit, or the conferment of spiritual gifts. Rather, he will speak in language that relates to salvation itself, not some experience extraneous to it – for salvation is the whole point of the discussion at hand.

**Giving Them The Holy Spirit**

*“. . . giving them the Holy Ghost . . .”* Other versions read, *“giving the Holy Spirit to them,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“gave the Holy Spirit to them,”* <sup>MRD</sup> *“granting them the Holy Spirit,”* <sup>NAB</sup> *“bestowing the Holy Spirit upon them,”* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and *“He gave*

⇒ *“Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of his Spirit”* (1 John 4:13).

**Not a single one of these texts is referring to some miraculous enduement, or to an experience that is unique to only some of the saved.** And, indeed, if that was the case, the whole incident would have had no relevance to the matter being disputed in Jerusalem. They did not come together to discuss spiritual gifts, or the ability to work miracles, or what happened when the apostles laid their hands on people. It was the affirmation that circumcision was

essential to salvation that caused this gathering to convene. It was also fueled by the statement that the law of Moses also had to be kept.

Now, Peter, who had the keys to the kingdom of heaven, felt the conversion (not the miraculous endowment) of those at the house of Cornelius was germane to this discussion. **He states that God gave the Holy Spirit to those brethren, and that**

Rather, this is their conclusion, and it is included in Scripture to attest to its truth: *“When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, **Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life**”* (Acts 11:18). Notice, their saying *“glorified God.”* They said this was evidence that God had granted them *“repentance unto life”* – and that relates to salvation, not spiritual gifts. It also confirmed that Jesus had done what He

case – and his whole argument relates to salvation.

⇒ When the event took place, Peter said, *“Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost **as well as we?**”* (Acts 10:47).

⇒ When reporting the event, He said it moved him to recall the words of the King Himself, *“John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 11:16; 1:5). John the Baptist also taught this to the multitudes (Mk 1:8).

⇒ He also said, *“God gave them the like gift **as He did unto us**, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Acts 11:17).

⇒ Now, years later, Peter again reports that God gave the people at Cornelius’ house *“the Holy Ghost, **even as he did unto us.**”*

**Men may make valiant attempts to distinguish the giving of the Spirit to those on the day of Pentecost from all other experiences. Peter, however, extends himself to show this was not the case – and his whole argument relates to salvation.**

**He did it as One who knew their hearts.** Luke’s account of the event reads, *“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word”* (Acts 10:44). In his report of the event, Peter used the same terminology: *“the Holy Ghost fell on them”* (Acts 11:15). He added that when this happened he remembered what Jesus had said: *“Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that He said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 11:16). He then concluded, *“Forasmuch then as God gave them the like **gift** as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?”* (Acts 11:17). Those who heard his explanation, which included apostles (11:1), did not conclude from this that those gathered at the house of Cornelius had received miraculous gifts.

was exalted to do, as Peter declared to the Jewish council: *“Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for **to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins**”* (Acts 5:31). **The incident at Cornelius’ house confirmed the giving of repentance was not ONLY to Israel.** That is why this report was relevant to the discussion.

**Even as He Did Unto Us**

*“. . . even as He did unto us.”* Other versions read, *“just as He did to us,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“just as He also did to us,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“as He gave the Holy Spirit to us,”*<sup>GWN</sup> and *“exactly as He did to us.”*<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Men may make valiant attempts to distinguish the giving of the Spirit to those on the day of Pentecost from all other experiences. Peter, however, extends himself to show this was **not** the

He makes no reference to those at Cornelius house speaking with tongues and magnifying God. The reason for this is that this testified to God’s acceptance of them. It was more of a sign to Peter and those with him that God had received the Gentiles. **The manner in which God did this confirmed that circumcision and conformity to the law of Moses was NOT a requisite to salvation – which is Peter’s whole point.**

Now, Peter will make a further observation – one that was not made when he was at the house of Cornelius, or when he originally reported the event to the brethren in Jerusalem. Also, the response of the brethren to his report did not include this observation. However, it is one worthy of much consideration.

**THEIR HEARTS WERE PURIFIED BY FAITH**

***“<sup>9</sup> And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.”***

It is possible to read of the events that took place at the house of Cornelius,

and suppose we are obligated to harmonize it with our own notions of salvation, or with our idea of what the Scriptures teach about being saved. Such an effort will yield certain frustration, moving one to take an extreme position

that completely neuters the text, making it pointless. **The same God who knows the hearts of men has no interest in how His actions or words fit into our ideas.** The purpose of His Word is not to support the teachings or positions of men –

whatever they are. It is the business of every believer to see to it that they receive the Word of God AS His Word, and not as a proof text to support what they are saying. **You will detect immediately that Peter has no interest in defending a personal position.** He is justifying God, and showing that what God did overthrew the error that was being perpetrated by certain from Judaea, and by believers who had been of *“the sect of the Pharisees.”*

**PUT NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US AND THEM**

*“And put no difference between us and them . . .”* Other versions read, *“made no distinction between us and them,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“making no division between them and us,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“God doesn’t discriminate between Jewish and non-Jewish people,”*<sup>GWN</sup> and *“God did the same thing for them that He did for us.”*<sup>LIVING</sup>

Therefore, there is not one gospel for the Jews, and another for the Gentiles. There is not one gift of the Spirit for the apostles, and another for others – for the same word delivered to the apostles concerning the giving of the Spirit is applied to those of the house of Cornelius. **Further, this whole matter has to do with the appropriation of salvation, which was the issue being discussed.**

In all of this, the gift of the Spirit is the point, not the abilities that He confers at His will. The same Spirit who made the apostles *apostles*, enables others to fulfill their role in the body. The apostles were placed *“first”* in the body, but *“the same Spirit”* works differently in other members of the body (1 Cor 12:4,8,9). In the First Corinthians text, what the various members DID was the point. In our text, the Spirit Himself is the point – **and He is not given independently of salvation.**

Peter used a similar form of reasoning when accounting for the commonality of faith among all believers, including the apostles. *“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained **like precious faith with us** through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Pet 1:1). Other versions read, *“a faith of the same kind as ours,”*<sup>NASB</sup> and *“a faith*

*of equal standing with ours.”*<sup>RSV</sup> That faith was not of the same *“measure”* – that is, it was not designed to do the same thing in everyone (Rom 12:3-6). **However, it was a *“common faith,”* not differing in substance, but in function.**

This is also true of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter told his hearers on the day of Pentecost that, upon repenting and being baptized, they would receive *“the gift of the Holy Spirit”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Acts 2:38). It was the same Holy Spirit that had seen *“shed forth”* before their very eyes – a gift that was promised before

What does it mean for the heart to be purified or cleansed? Here we deal with the root of cleansing, which is *“faith in the operation of God”* (Col 2:12). According to the Colossians text, this occurs when a person is buried with Christ in baptism. Yet, the Holy Spirit was given to those in Cornelius’ house before they were baptized. For some, this proves to be an insurmountable problem, but it need not be so.

There is no need to try and rid ourselves of the Cornelius factor. Peter is clearly associating this text with

**Although the salvation wrought at the house of Cornelius was a *“common salvation”* (Jude 1:3), the faith they enjoyed was a *“common faith”* (Tit 1:4), and the gift of the Spirit was *“like”* the one received *“at the first”* (Acts 11:15) this was an epoch of sorts. The tent of salvation was being *“enlarged,”* its curtains were being *“stretched forth,”* its *“cords lengthened,”* and its *“stakes strengthened”***

(Acts 2:33). That gift of the Holy Spirit was the *“promise”* that was made to their children (Acts 2:39). Peter also said that what the hearers at the house of Cornelius received was this *“gift”* (Acts 10:46; 11:17).

To my knowledge, there is no place in Scripture that affirms there is more than one *“gift of the Holy Spirit.”* There are *“gifts”* imparted by the Spirit (1 Cor 12:4-11), but they are distinguished from the gift of the Holy Spirit Himself, which is common to all who are in Christ Jesus.

**PURIFYING THEIR HEARTS BY FAITH**

*“. . . purifying their hearts by faith.”* Other versions read, *“cleansing their hearts by faith,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“making clean their hearts by faith,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“cleansed non-Jewish people through faith,”*<sup>GWN</sup> *“cleansed their lives through faith,”*<sup>LIVING</sup> *“made their hearts pure,”*<sup>IE</sup> and *“cleansed their hearts by faith (by a strong and welcome conviction that Jesus is the Messiah, through Whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God).”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

salvation. He does not do so by citing everything that took place at that time. He does not even mention his own preaching, or that the people had gathered to hear words whereby they would be saved. **He is providing us an overview, not a detailed picture.** He is speaking of causes, not the means through which the causes were made known to the recipients.

Although the salvation wrought at the house of Cornelius was a *“common salvation”* (Jude 1:3), the faith they enjoyed was a *“common faith”* (Tit 1:4), and the gift of the Spirit was *“like”* the one received *“at the first”* (Acts 11:15) this was an epoch of sorts. The tent of salvation was being *“enlarged,”* its curtains were being *“stretched forth,”* its *“cords lengthened,”* and its *“stakes strengthened”* (Isa 54:2). **The Gentiles were being brought into the household according to the ancient promises** (Isa 11:10; 42:6; 49:6,22; 60:3; 66:19; Mal 1:11). This rapid expansion of the church, although it was foretold centuries before, had not yet penetrated the hearts of even the apostles. God worked at the house of Cornelius to substantiate to Peter and

his brethren what was happening before their eyes. Repentance was being granted, faith was in motion, hearts were being purified, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. None of this was unique to the Gentiles. This was not a different salvation, nor had they heard a different Gospel. Their repentance was not unique, nor was their faith. **Having witnessed all of this, Peter knew this was not intended to obviate the necessity of baptism.** He therefore *"commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord"* (Acts 10:48). It was no doubt at that time that those in the house of Cornelius became

text, the point was Divine acceptance or approval, based upon God's survey of the heart. Peter would not have people baptized unless he was convinced it was appropriate – and these were Gentiles, whom he had formerly considered *"unclean."* **Now God confirmed to him and those with him that those Gentiles had been cleansed and made acceptable.**

In all of this there were realities that are common to everyone who is saved: faith, cleansing, acceptance, and the receiving of the Holy Spirit – that is, it is a *"common salvation."*

speaking in tongues, for Peter and those with Him heard them so speaking. **However, it does mean that this was not a pivotal point in the whole event.** I question both the integrity and the motives of those who champion the necessity of speaking in tongues. To me, they are of the same order as those certain men who came down from Judaea, together with the former Pharisees, who said it was necessary to be circumcised.

For those who are simple enough to imagine that baptism is in the same category as circumcision, let them remember that Peter *"commanded"* those Gentiles to be *"baptized in the name of the Lord"* (Acts 10:48). Owing to the clear confirmation of Divine acceptance, however, he did not command them to be circumcised. Those who demand a strict sequence of procedure will simply have to wrestle with the text until they can see with greater clarity. Try as you may, you will not find the 1-2-3-4-5 approach to obtaining salvation in Scripture. **It is therefore incumbent upon everyone who represents the Lord to see to it they do not violate any word or work of Almighty God** – and that includes them all.

God cannot speak in contradiction of what He does, and He cannot work in contradiction of what He says. It is impossible for Him to either speak or work in a manner that opposes His character. Furthermore, there is no valid doctrine or doctrinal emphasis that remotely suggests those possibilities.

**He does, and He cannot work in contradiction of what He says. It is impossible for Him to either speak or work in a manner that opposes His character.**

personally aware of their cleansing, for baptism is related to the obtaining of a pure conscience (1 Pet 3:21).

#### The Time Of Greater Demand

The time of the early church was one of greater demand. Commencing with John the Baptist, the objective was never to merely baptize people. **Those who were baptized had to be qualified.** On the day of Pentecost, Peter told the people it had to be preceded by repentance (Acts 2:38). Philip told the Ethiopian eunuch that it was necessary for him first to believe with all of his heart (Acts 8:37). In our

#### The Matter of Tongues

Those with inordinate affection for speaking in tongues, and those with a determination to oppose it, deal extensively with the fact that those at the house of Cornelius were heard to *"speak in tongues and magnify God"* (Acts 10:46). **However, in his initial report of his experience at Cornelius' house, Peter did not even mention that they spoke "in tongues"** (Acts 11:5-18). Now, in his second report of the event, he also fails to mention the Gentiles speaking in tongues. This certainly does not constitute a denial that they did, in fact,

## WHY DO YOU TEMPT GOD?

*"<sup>10</sup> 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?"*

Peter will now reason on the facts of the case, showing the unreasonableness of the attempt to bind circumcision and the keeping of the law upon the Gentile converts. **Unlike mere human ideas, the truth of God loses none of its potency when men reason upon it with pure hearts.** In fact, the further you

delve into the truth, the more, solid it becomes, supporting the soul, bringing confidence, and exposing the folly of error. I am greatly disappointed that so few leading people in Christian circles find joy in reasoning upon the truth. Too often the locus of their reasoning is the circumference of their own opinion.

**There is something else to be seen here. Peter is basing his reasoning upon what God DID, not what He said.** He can do this because God never works in

contradiction of what He says. That is, in His working at the house of Cornelius He did what He had said He was committed to doing. He saved those of humble and contrite spirit (Psa 34:18), focused on those who trembled at His word (Isa 66:2), and caused those who heard to live (Isa 55:3). It goes without saying that it is not wise to question the way God does about fulfilling His word.

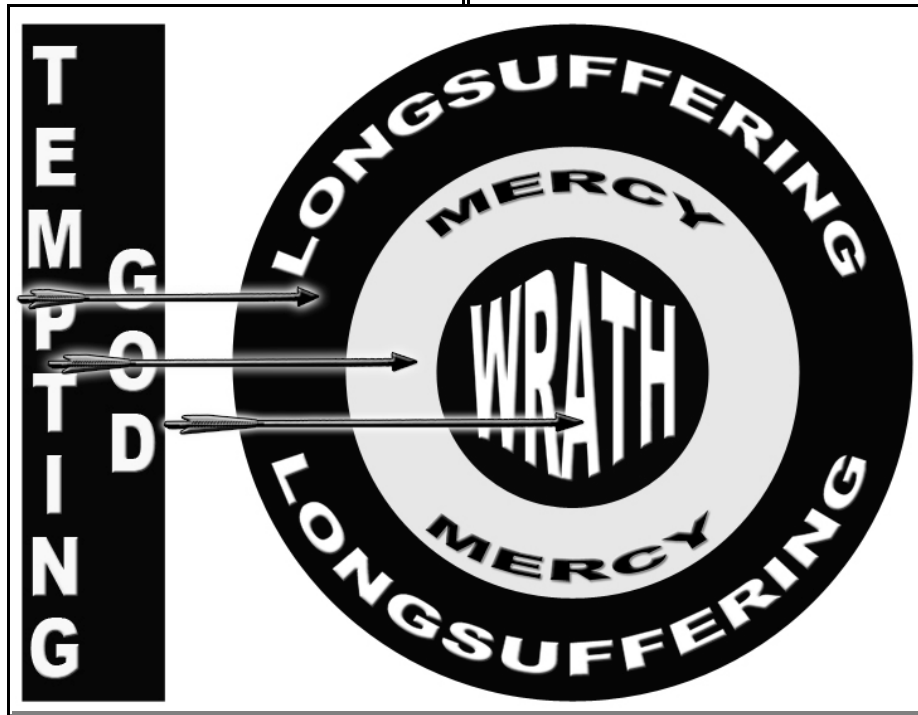
#### WHY DO YOU TEMPT GOD?

*"Now therefore why tempt ye God*

... Other versions read, "why do you test God,"<sup>NKJV</sup> "put God to the test,"<sup>NASB</sup> "try to test God,"<sup>NIV</sup> "make trial of God,"<sup>RSV</sup> "challenging God,"<sup>NLT</sup> "going to correct God,"<sup>LIVING</sup> "try an experiment upon God,"<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and "strain the patience of God."<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

drink" (Ex 17:7). It is written of that occasion, "And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?" (Ex 17:7). It was in view of this that Moses,

the **ultimate** outpouring of His wrath, when Jesus returns in glory. Men were introduced to the wrath of God breaking out against sin in the flood of Noah's day (Gen 7:21). It was seen in the destruction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, sparing only Zoar, in which Lot sought refuge (Gen 19:23-24; 29:23).



There is such a thing as provoking God to anger – that is the result of tempting the Lord to the point of provocation. When Corinth was attempting to eat from the table of demons and the table of the Lord at the same time, Paul wrote to them, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than He?" (1 Cor 10:2). **They were tempting God, and that was a very foolish thing to do!**

In their attempts to bind circumcision and keeping the law of Moses upon the Gentile converts, **the men who had caused this council were tempting God.** They were seeking to impose things upon the Gentiles that God did not require. They were treating the household of God as though it was their own. They were conducting themselves as lord's over the heritage of God – touching the apple of His eye (Zech 2:8). Consequently, they were in a most dangerous position.

This is a most arresting text – both sobering and challenging. It must be remembered that it is written, "Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted Him in Massah" (Deut 6:16). The event of reference took place when Israel was journeying through the wilderness en route to Canaan. It is written that they pitched their tents in Rephidim, "and there was no water for the people to drink." Discontent with the situation, "the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? **wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?**" (Ex 17:2). They "murmured against Moses," asking him why he brought them out of Egypt to kill them with thirst. Moses cried out to the Lord saying, "What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me" (Ex 17:4). It was there that Moses was directed by God to smite a rock with his rod. God promised him, "there shall come water out of it, that the people may

prior to his death, said "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah"<sup>NASB</sup> (Deut 6:16).

What does it mean to "tempt God," or put Him "to the test?" You may recall that Jesus quoted this text to the devil when he tempted the Lord to jump off the pinnacle the Temple, trusting that God would send His angels to rescue Him (Matt 4:6-7).

**Behind this solemn warning is the fact that God has an absolute hatred for sin.** This hatred is so pronounced that sin constitutes a testing of God's longsuffering. It is like forcing Him to confront and deal with what is the very antithesis of His nature. His wrath is against "all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," and there is absolutely no question about it. There has been measured and relatively minor outbreaks of this wrath throughout history. I say *relatively* as compared to

**A YOKE THEY COULD NOT BEAR**

"... to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

The people of God are already called to take up their cross daily, dying to self and the world (Lk 9:23). In addition they are to take Christ's yoke upon themselves, getting under it with Him, and engaging in His work. It is within this yoke that we are taught by Jesus, coming to know the Father and appropriating wisdom and spiritual understanding (Matt 11:29-30).

**As if this was not enough, some were not attempting to put an additional yoke upon the neck of the disciples, increasing their load, and offering no corresponding relief.** This was the yoke of Law – the Law that is appropriately called "the ministration of death" and "of condemnation" (2 Cor 3:7,9). It was a yoke of rules, laws, and ordinances – the

yoke of DOING, that was not accompanied with the spirit of power, love, and a sound mind. It was a law that did not demand faith (Gal 3:12), did not clear the conscience (Heb 9:9), and gave no access to the grace of God.

It may be countered that these men were sincere, and were really attempting to do what was right. And, indeed, I do not doubt that this was the case. **But that did not alter the fact that they were tempting God in seeking to impose an unbearable yoke upon His people.** They were trying God's patience and longsuffering with their action – provoking Him.

By saying neither their fathers nor themselves were able to bear the yoke of the Law, Peter meant that they were unable to fulfill it. After they had extended their best and most consistent effort, the verdict was, *“There is none righteous, no, **not one**: There is **none** that understandeth, there is **none** that seeketh after God. They are **all** gone out of the way, they are **together** become unprofitable; there is **none** that doeth*

**Such people are tempting God – provoking Him to anger because they have usurped His Son, who has all power in heaven and earth. Such teachers are to cease and desist from tempting God.**

*good, no, **not one**”* (Rom 3:10-12). Not only is the Law *“not made for a righteous man”* (1 Tim 1:9), **it cannot produce a righteous man, “for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain”** (Gal 2:21). The truth of the matter is that the person who chooses to live by Law has no perceived need of Jesus – **and Jesus' death is not effective for him as long as he chooses that course.**

At least these men sought to impose the law of Moses upon believers – not *“the tradition of the elders”* (Matt 15:2). What can be said of those who seek to impose the rules of men upon believers today? They have stooped beneath the men of our text, choosing inferior laws. What may be said of those who

recommend and promote rules arranged by men, yet which are guaranteed by them to resolve problems caused by sin? What can be said of them? What of those who impose concepts of praise and worship upon the church that God has not imposed. What may be said of those who bind their ideas of music, or singing, or other forms of expression upon the saints? **Such people are tempting God – provoking Him to anger because they have usurped His Son, who has all power in heaven and earth.** Such teachers are to cease and desist from tempting God. Provoking the Lord is certainly not wise. It is a betrayal of the worst kind of ignorance. As it is written, *“Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than He?”* (1 Cor 10:22).

## SAVED THROUGH THE GRACE OF GOD

***“<sup>11</sup> But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”***

Here Peter reasons in a most unusual way – at least to those who are not acquainted with Kingdom manners. Rather than seeking to correct the thinking of the new Gentile believers, he endeavors to correct the wayward thinking of some of the believers in the Jerusalem church.

### WE BELIEVE

*“But we believe . . .”* Other versions read, *“No! We believe,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“On the contrary, we believe,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> *“But we have faith,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“We certainly believe,”* <sup>GWN</sup> *“In fact, we believe,”* <sup>WILLIAMS</sup> and *“Surely the fact is that.”* <sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

This is not the statement of a creedal persuasion; i.e. “Here is what our group believes.” **This is the confession of**

**an inner and solid persuasion.** This is something buttressed by both *“substance”* and *“evidence”* (Heb 11:1). This is a conviction concerning which there is no question or doubt.

### SAVED THROUGH THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

*“. . . that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”*

Under the circumstances, and considering that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation *“to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”* (Rom 1:16), one might imagine that Peter would have said just the opposite – i.e. **“THEY** will be saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ even as **WE.**” However, this is not the manner of his reasoning. **With the skill of a spiritual tactician, he raises the thinking of his hearers outside of the confinement of traditional Judaistic**

**thinking.** Peter knows that the propensity to think in terms of doing, as opposed to believing, is a fundamental weakness. Man's doing caused the fall, but it is not the means of his recovery! **Doing – man's doing – is not the principle activity in New Covenant, although it is involved.** In the matter of salvation, **Christ's doing** is the fundamental activity, and believing is man's fundamental responsibility. Rather than freeing man from the obligation of doing, believing raises both the possibility and quality of the doing of men. When *“the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ”* is fundamental, doing the will of God is not only possible, it becomes the preference and driving compulsion of men. When there is little understanding of the grace of God, doing is attended with a greater degree of difficulty, and sin is given an advantage.

Normally, we think of grace in

association with God the Father (Lk 2:40; Acts 11:23; 13:43; 14:26; 15:40; 20:24; Rom 5:15; 1 Cor 1:4; 3:10; 15:10; 2 Cor 1:12; 2 C or 6:1; 8:1; 2 Cor 9:14; Gal 2:21; Eph 3:2,7; Col 1:6; Tit 2:11; Heb 2:9; 12:15' 1 Pet 4:10; 5:12; Jude 1:4).

There is also reference to *“the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Thess 1:12).

However, there are also references to *“the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Rom 16:20,24; 1 Cor 16:23; 2 Cor 8:9; 13:14; Gal 6:18; Phil 4:23; 1 Thess 5:28; 2 Thess 3:18; Phil 1:25; Rev 22:21), and to the *“grace of Christ”* (Gal 1:5). **This accents that, in redemption, Jesus is the Means through which the grace of God is realized, or experienced.**

This is only the sixth time the word *“grace”* has been mentioned in the book of Acts. The first use of the word *“grace”* is specifically said to have been associated with **obtaining** salvation. It is apparent to me that there was a **growing perception** of the significance of the grace of God in redemption. Previous references to *“grace”* are as follows.

- ⇒ *“And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all”* (Acts 4:33).
- ⇒ *“Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord”* (Acts 11:23).
- ⇒ *“Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God”* (Acts 13:43).
- ⇒ *“Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands”* (Acts 14:3).
- ⇒ *“And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled”* (Acts 14:26).

**It seems to me that as the church progressed, there was a growing perception of the prominence of the grace of God in salvation.** Acts 18:27 states that those who believed did so through grace: *“And when he (Apollos) was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace.”* Paul confessed to the elders of Ephesus that he had been directed by Jesus to preach *“the gospel of the grace of God”* (Acts 20:24). When he left them, he commended them *“to God, and to the word of His grace”* (Acts 20:32). Conceptually, there was a keen awareness of the grace of God, but the understanding of its prominence in the life of faith grew the more men were consciously involved in the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

**By comparison, the epistles contain one hundred and fourteen references to grace.** James contains one reference to God giving *“more grace”* (4:6). Jude contains one reference to men corrupting *“the grace of our God”* (1:4). Second John contains one reference to *“grace”* (1:3). Peter’s epistles contain ten references to *“grace,”* excluding a reference to *“the grace of life”* in 1 Peter 3:7 (1 Pet 1:2,10,13; 4:10; 5:5,10,12; 2 Pet 1:2; 3:18). The epistles written by Paul contain ninety-nine references to *“grace,”* eleven of which are found in Hebrews (for those who doubt Hebrews was written by Paul). The book of the Revelation contains two references to *“grace”* – one being the last verse of the Bible (1:4; 22:21). The phrase *“grace of God”* is not mentioned in the Bible until Luke 2:40. Of the thirty-nine times *“grace”* is used from Genesis through Malachi, the burden of the references refer to finding favor with God in the normalities of life. **There is no specified association of “grace” with being “saved” until our text, Acts 15:11.**

The word *“grace”* is mentioned 131 times in the New Testament Scriptures – 128 are to God’s grace. Four of them are found in the Gospels, which all apply to Jesus Himself (Lk 2:40; John 1:14,16,16,17). It is mentioned ten times in the book of Acts (4:33; 11:23; 13:43; 14:3,26; 15:11,40; 18:27; 20:24,32).

Including the book of Hebrews, 99 of the 128 references to *“grace”* are made by Paul. Excluding the book of Hebrews (8 times), the percentage is 71%.

**“GRACE” ASSOCIATED WITH JESUS AND SALVATION**

The Gospels .....	4 times
Acts .....	10 times
Paul’s writings .....	99 times
Peter’s writings .....	10 times
Jude .....	1 time
James .....	1 time
John’s writings .....	3 times

I have taken the time to give this brief review of the references to the grace of God to confirm the insight that was given to Peter at this time. **This is the first time in the Scriptures that such a clear and succinct statement is made concerning salvation being by “grace” – and it is tied directly to “the Lord Jesus Christ.”** This also confirms it was at a critical juncture in the history of the church, when the nature and extensiveness of salvation was being opened more fully to the church. The acceptance of the Gentiles was an epoch in history, and its association with the grace of God was a critical matter. Peter’s statement in this verse is the first clear and unquestionable association of the salvation of God with His grace. **It is the first time anything is said to have been done “through” or “by” God’s grace.** To me, this underscores the remarkable things happening at this time.

It ought to be noted that to this very day there remains a veil over the hearts of men concerning the grace of God. Precious few people see it as a means through which God actually does something. Too often, it is **not** associated with Divine accomplishments, but is rather viewed as God overlooking the human condition. Grace has to do with changing the human condition, not tolerating or overlooking it. Paul accounted for the remarkable change he experienced when he said, *“But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me”* (1 Cor 15:10). People who remain under the grip of sin, or are unproductive in the Kingdom of God are out of order speaking

about the grace of God. God's grace is always related to God **doing** something, **not** to Him tolerating or enduring

something. It has to do with bringing people higher, not leaving them in a low estate, and enduring their deficiencies.

Grace changes and empowers people, not leaving them as they were. Where there is no change, grace has not been received.

## THEY KEPT SILENCE AND LISTENED TO BARNABAS AND PAUL

***“<sup>12</sup> 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.”***

It will be apparent that there was more influence among these people than that of Peter. He had, indeed, spoken truth, but **the power of his words was not owing to his person, but to his Lord.** God stands behind those who speak the truth insightfully, and are bold to stand in *“the defense of the Gospel”* (Phil 1:17). **Where the speaking is discerning and the people possess honest and good hearts, controversy will be brought to an end.** That such is the case is abundantly evident in this text.

*disputing,”* or *“debate.”*<sup>NASB</sup> **However, the hearts of the people were ahead of their minds, and their love for the Lord exceeded devotion to their tradition, which had not been clearly overturned by their view of the text of Scripture.**

Even though Moses and the Prophets did not elucidate on the grace of God, John the Baptist said no word about it, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself made no direct reference to it, **there appeared to be a prevailing sense of its reality among these people.** Within the book of Acts, there has, to this point, been no record of delineation, or exposition, of God's grace. We read about God's grace being on the people (4:33), seeing the grace of God (11:23), an exhortation to

concerned did not even mention the word. The recorded words of Jesus contain not a single reference to *“grace.”* For those enamored of academia, such circumstances would introduce great difficulty for those hearing the words, *“we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved.”* However, this *“multitude”* was not stymied by the words of Peter, and no group rose up to dispute with him about that statement. Why was this so?

There are at least two factors that caused the flaming controversy that had been raging to cease with the words of Peter. One of them was NOT a profound academic understanding of the grace of God. Moses provided no such understanding nor did the prophets, nor John the Baptist. Jesus displayed the grace of God in His words and deeds, not by a scholastic definition or dissertation. **However, the nature and effectiveness of grace is woven into the fabric of salvation.** Divine favor and love are evident in the nature of salvation. Even though a person may not have heard much about *“grace,”* there is a sense of it that is integral to the Gospel itself, and to the experience of salvation.

**There is something of importance to be seen here. The substance and manner of the teaching that had taken place to this time did not contain a lot of direct references to the grace of God. There is no record of any extensive exposition of the grace of God.**

### ALL THE MULTITUDE KEPT SILENCE

*“Then all the multitude kept silence . . .”* Other versions read, *“the whole assembly became silent,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“all the people were quiet,”*<sup>BEBE</sup> *“the whole assembly kept still,”*<sup>CJB</sup> *“the whole assembly fell, silent,”*<sup>CSB</sup> *“all the multitude held their peace,”*<sup>DOUAY</sup> *“Everyone listened quietly,”*<sup>NLT</sup> *“there was no further discussion,”*<sup>LIVING</sup> *“the whole assembly remained silent,”*<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and *“by this he quieted the whole congregation.”*<sup>WILLIAMS</sup>

Until Peter had spoken, the whole assembly was anything but silent. Until that time there had been **“much**

continue in the grace of God (13:43), testimony being given to the *“word of His grace”* (14:3), and being recommended to the grace of God (14:26). Now, Peter has said for the first recorded time that we are *“saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

There is something of importance to be seen here. **The substance and manner of the teaching that had taken place to this time did not contain a lot of direct references to the grace of God.** There is no record of any extensive exposition of the grace of God. Certainly, at the very best, Moses and the Prophets only provided veiled references to grace. John the Baptist, so far as the record is

**Those who continue to argue concerning the necessity of the deeds of the Law after they have heard about the grace of God only confirm the hardness of their own hearts.** When Peter clearly said we are *“saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,”* it was a confirming word to those who had experienced salvation. **That was the first time of Scriptural record that such words were ever uttered!** The fact that they quelled the disputation among that vast body of people confirms that they had really tasted of the grace of God, even though it may not have been clear to them.

The words Peter were expertly spoken, reminding me of a statement

**Much of the ongoing contention that exists in the professed Christian community is traceable to a fundamental ignorance of the Scriptures, and the questionable commitment of the people to the Lord. If there ever comes a time when those two mitigating factors are resolved, significant progress will be made in the arena of religious disputation and controversy.**

made by Solomon: *“The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd”* (Eccl 12:11). The Amplified Bible reads, *“The words of the wise are like prodding goads, and firmly fixed [in the mind] like nails are the collected sayings which are given [as proceeding] from one Shepherd.”* In this text, the Lord was speaking to His people – and they quieted themselves to listen.

**A Word About Our Times**

Our times are not at all like those being chronicled in our text. Unlike those ancient days, our times are not marked by a clear proclamation of the truth – a proclamation that pointedly confronts religious error and the traditions of men. Also, there is a glaring absence of a strong devotion to the Lord and His Word, together with a staggering ignorance of the text of Scripture itself. **Much of the ongoing contention that exists in the professed Christian community is traceable to a fundamental ignorance of the Scriptures, and the questionable commitment of the people to the Lord.** If there ever comes a time when those two mitigating factors are resolved, significant progress will be made in the arena of religious disputation and controversy.

**THEY GAVE AUDIENCE TO BARNABAS AND PAUL**

*“ . . . and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.”* Other versions read, *“and listened to,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“they were listening to,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“they hearkened to,”*<sup>ASV</sup> *“they heard,”*<sup>DOUAY</sup> *“listened quietly,”*<sup>NLT</sup> *“hearkened to,”*<sup>RWB</sup> *“were hearkening,”*<sup>YLT</sup> and *“they listened attentively.”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The word *“gave audience”* are translated from a single Greek word (ἤκουσον) which means: *“to attend to, consider what is or has been said . . . understand, perceive the sense of what is said,”*<sup>THAYER</sup> and *“heed, listen to, understand, learn of, give someone a hearing,”*<sup>GINGRICH</sup>

**The marvelous capacity to listen, weigh, and discern what is being said is fast becoming a lost art in our time.** Our generation is largely a thoughtless one. This has given rise to much frivolity. Entertainment has now become so dominant in religious circles that there is scarcely anything said that requires concentrated hearing or understanding. This was not the case in our text. After hearing Peter’s insightful words concerning salvation by God’s grace being common to both the Gentile and the Jew, the minds of the people were settled down. The fire of controversy ceased to burn. The agitation of sectarianism and prejudice was no longer present. Now, the people were ready to hear the report of the working of the Lord – **a working that would confirm that salvation is by grace, and that circumcision and the keeping of the Law are not requirements for salvation.**

**Barnabas and Paul Report**

Now, with the hearts and minds focused on Barnabas and Paul, they declare *“what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.”* Other versions read, *“how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them,”*<sup>NIV</sup> and *“rehearsed what signs and wonders God had performed through*

*them among the Gentiles.”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Notice the care with which this report is given. Barnabas and Paul did not report the miracles and wonders that they did, but the ones **God had wrought** through them. They did not shine the spotlight of attention upon their activity, but on **what the Lord had done** through them. They had already declared to the brethren at Antioch, *“all that God had done with them”* during the mission to which they were called from that very city (Acts 14:27). When they later arrived in Jerusalem they also *“declared all things that God had done with them”* to the church, the apostles, and the elders (Acts 15:4). Now, to the special assembly that had been convened to consider what was to be taught to the Gentiles, they provide even more details concerning the working of the Lord, *“relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.”*<sup>NASB</sup>

*“Oh how the soul hung upon the ear; how the countenances brightened, while they related their progress from city to city, from province to province; how the word of the Lord had been glorified, and how miracles had been effected by his arm. How princes and nobles, and multitudes of the people had been converted without either number or record; and how the unbelieving Jews in all places had stirred up the misguided populace to outrage, imprison, and stone them for the sake of Christ. But in all storms and conflicts, they were more than conquerors through him that loved them. All this was a gentile glory, reflected back on the church of the firstborn.”*  
 . . . . . Joseph Sutcliffe, 1834

- ⇒ On the island of Crete, Paul had struck a sorcerer blind who sought to turn a listener away from the faith (Acts 13:9-11).
- ⇒ Paul and Barnabas had remained *“a long time”* in Iconium, *“speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of His grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands”* (Acts 14:3).
- ⇒ In Lystra, Paul had healed a man who was *“cripple from his mother’s womb”* (Acts 14:9-10).
- ⇒ When Paul was stoned and left for dead outside the city of Lystra, the disciples stood around him, and he rose up and went into the city (Acts 14:19-20).

Thus, the required testimonies have been given by those whom the Head of the church Himself had involved in the work. Peter, Barnabas, and Paul were all solicited and empowered for the work

from heaven. Their work was not initiated by the church, but a special call was issued to Peter (Acts 10:9-20), as well as Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13:2). Both calls were to minister to the Gentiles.

Both missions were blessed by the Lord with extensive results, being confirmed by the Head of the church Himself. Both were spiritual epochs. Now, all of the required facts are now in.

## CONCLUSION

The book of Acts is a record of Kingdom epochs – **events orchestrated from heaven that turned the history of the world. Consider them!** They all postulate an exalted and reigning Christ, and a Divine purpose that is being executed with exacting precision. All of heaven is involved. God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the holy angels, and even a great cloud of witnesses who are referred to as *“just men made perfect”* (Heb 12:23). The work is being driven by an eternal purpose, conceived before the world began. And, everything is working together for the good of those who love God and are the called according to His purpose.

Ponder some of the epochal things that are recorded in this book. The consideration of them has a sanctifying effect upon the soul. They tug at the heart and challenge the mind, provoking one to introspection as well as contemplation. They all confirm that Christ is, indeed, reigning in glory, administering *“the day of salvation,”* and *“bringing many sons to glory.”*

⇨ The ascension of Jesus (1:9-11).

⇨ The choosing of an apostle to fill the bishopric vacated by Judas (1:15-26).

⇨ The day of Pentecost, and 3,000 being added to the church (2:1-41).

⇨ The garnering of 5,000 souls in Solomon’s porch (4:4).

⇨ Great grace given to the church in the time of opposition (4:33).

⇨ The intervention of heaven against corruption (5:1-11).

⇨ The miraculous release of Peter and John from prison (5:18-20).

⇨ The stoning of Stephen, and the consequent spread of the Word (7:54-8:4).

⇨ The conversion of the city of Samaria (8:5-25).

⇨ The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch while en route to Ethiopia (8:26-38).

⇨ The calling and conversion of Saul of

Tarsus (9:3-20).

⇨ The conversion of the household and others at the home of Cornelius 10:1-48).

⇨ The miraculous release of Peter from prison (12:4-17).

⇨ Herod is stricken dead after being lifted up with pride (12:21-24)

⇨ Barnabas and Saul are called to a special mission, now being reported (13:1-2).

This is unquestionably a book that chronicles the work of the enthroned and empowered Christ from heaven. It is a record of Jesus working through those who have been reconciled to God and are living by faith. It also confirms the ultimate overthrow of inimical forces, corroborating the inferiority of the powers of darkness. There is, indeed, great consolation and encouragement to be had by ingesting and cogitating on the events that are reported in the Acts of the apostles – God working through them.

**Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 11/7/08. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Sixty-fifth lesson will cover verses 13 through 21 of the fifteenth chapter: “THE REPOSE OF JAMES.” After hearing the various reports of the works of God, James perceived them in view of the Scriptures – particularly the prophecies of the day of salvation. He confirms from the Scriptures that the acceptance of the Gentiles was declared of old time. Further, although they would be joined to the Jews, becoming fellow-heirs with them, they would not have the sign and seal of the Old Covenant imposed upon them. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.**

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**“THE KINGDOM OF GOD” is a 536 page book that identifies and expounds the nature of the Kingdom of God, showing its relationship to Jesus Christ, and the salvation that is in Him with eternal glory. Its reflection of the nature of God Himself, and how that nature permeates the entirety of salvation is delineated. Time is also given to the superiority of the Word of God, interrelational aspects of the truth, and the predetermined destiny of the church, which is the body of Christ. The information on the website, identified above the graphic, provides an overview of the book, together with a complete index. The entire book can also be seen in the PDF format, that can be read by Acrobat reader.**



### **THE WORD OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST**

KNEO, 91.7 FM -- 4:00 - 4:15 PM -- Monday thru Friday

The purpose of this program is to clarify the nature and content of the Gospel of Christ. Our target is the body of Christ, and our aim is to strengthen their faith and enhance their hope.