

Is Salvation by Law or Grace? Part 5

Scripture: Acts 15:25-35

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Acts chapter fifteen for our study this morning. Now wrapping up the fifteenth chapter, and I've reviewed sufficiently enough to just make a very brief few statements in regard to review. But I am going to try to wrap up this chapter which is pretty much repetitious now of what has been decided earlier in the chapter. You'll remember that the people had faced a very serious issue in the early church. The gospel of grace had been preached, that is a man is saved by grace through faith. And that salvation, that is a relationship with God comes when God offers a free gift which man simply takes, and that man doesn't have to do anything to earn that. And Paul had preached this message to Gentiles, and Gentiles had believed and churches had sprung up in Antioch, in Cyprus and in Galatia. But fast on the heels of Paul and Barnabas had come men known as Judaizers, called the circumcision party.

And their effort was to go to those Gentiles and tell them that grace was not enough. That they had to be circumcised and they had to obey the ceremonial law of Moses to be saved. So that it was salvation by grace plus some certain works that they had to do. Well that became a very critical issue. How was a man to be saved? What is the truth? Is it grace and grace alone: or is it grace plus all of the Mosaic features of the Old Testament, plus being circumcised? Well that issue needed to be dealt with, and so in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, and incidentally Acts is the record of the years of the early church, the church came together in Jerusalem. The Apostles and elders of Jerusalem along with Paul and Barnabas who came down from Antioch where they were ministering to Gentiles. And they had to make a decision, and so they had a council, the result of the decision is stated in verses 19 to 21, we'll just pin point that. "Wherefore, my judgment is, (and here comes the statement of James, who was one of the chief men in the church in Jerusalem, my judgment is, and this is the statement of the decision) that we trouble not them, who from among the Gentiles are turned to God." In other words, we do not need to go back and add anything to grace. We have preached the message of pure grace, free grace, and both of those terms are somewhat redundant, because grace is grace and grace is pure and grace is free, but we will not cloud grace with law. When you add law to grace, grace is no more grace. We will maintain what they have already heard, we will not add anything else. He says, 'But (verse 20) we will write unto them, to stay away from idolatry, certain sexual and marital practices, things that are strangled and blood.'" Now these were things strictly forbidden in Jewish ceremonial law. And there was no sense, even though they were saved by grace, there was no sense in doing those things that would offend Jews who would be watching them.

Because verse 21 says, "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him: being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day." There was still a lot of people in Gentile towns being plugged into Mosaic law. And there was no sense in just running wild with their liberty so that they offended Jews who needed to hear the gospel, and would be turned off by certain Gentile practices.

And so for salvations sake, grace alone, for fellowship and witness sake, here are a few things to be careful about. So that you don't needlessly offend. Well that settled the issue. And when the issue was settled, it was then determined that they would send Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch to tell the Gentiles this marvelous news, that grace salvation is valid, you need nothing more but remember to be careful not to offend those Jews who do not understand the liberties that salvation brings. And so they decided to send Paul and Barnabas with the message, They decided to send two other guys, verse 22 which we considered, Judas and Silas, why? Because these were two from the Jerusalem Church, these were two prophets from the church in Jerusalem. And they wanted to send them in order that there might be a clear message, for example if only Paul and Barnabas go, somebody from the Judaizers is going to say, well what did you expect them to say? But if two of the prophets and chief leaders right out of the Jerusalem Church confirm the decision, that gives weight to it. And in addition to sending those four men, they wanted to write a letter, verse 23, "And they wrote by them after this manner." And so they bore a letter, and apparently James wrote the letter. The letter said, and this is the introduction, "The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia." That statement alone is a shocking statement. The fact that the Jews said, the brethren to the brethren, means that they have accepted Gentiles. That is the very serious problem of the early church, was the allowance of Gentiles to participate fully in all that the church had through Christ. The Jews wanted to keep a separation. And here is an acceptance as wide as the grace of God, the brethren to the brethren. And the Jew and the Gentile are one in Christ. The letter continued, "Forasmuch as we have heard that certain who went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls." Now the best manuscripts end the verse there, the statement that follows is really picked up from an earlier verse, where they said, you must be circumcised and keep the law. And so they said, now we know you've had some who came from us, they weren't authorized and they weren't with any authority, but they came from Jerusalem, and they troubled you and subverted your souls. In other words, they came to these Gentiles who were just enjoying the concepts of grace, some had actually been saved already, some were considering salvation, on the edge of it, and they imposed on them all this Mosaic system for salvation. And this troubled them, and the word is deep trouble. And it's used twice in the book of Galatians to speak of the trouble that legalism brings. And it subverted their souls, uh subversion was used of military marauders who went in to devastate a town, and these people were like that, they came in and did spiritual marauding. It's used of bankruptcy; they came in and tried to bankrupt these Gentiles of their salvation through grace.

Now legalism is a serious problem friends, it is a serious problem. To say that a man is saved by grace plus anything fouls up salvation.

Let me illustrate to you how serious a problem this is. Turn to Galatians chapter 1, this is the...this is the number one heresy of the world. Now in Galatians 1 and I'm only using this text as an illustration of the fact that legalism is so destructive. Whenever you start trying to earn your own salvation you've just disqualified yourself from being saved, I don't care what it is you use to earn it, it disqualifies you. Salvation is pure grace and that's all. Now the Apostle Paul has written a lot of letters in the New Testament, and in all of them, listen to this, in all of them except Galatians, he begins with a spirit of commendation and thankfulness, I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, I thank the Lord, as he said to the Thessalonians for your labor of love and for your work of love and, and patience and so forth and so on. He is talking in all of these cases in the Epistles about something for which they can be commended. You know even the Corinthians, who were messed up every way you could get messed up, he spent the whole first chapter commending them, at least a good portion of it. He said, I thank God that you come behind in no gifts and oh this and this about you wonderful Corinthians. And then he went on for sixteen chapters to blast them. Well this is his pattern. But he doesn't do this here in Galatians; he makes no commendation he says nothing about being thankful for them at all. You say why? Well, Paul can tolerate the kind of Corinthian corruption to a certain degree, why? Because it is the corruption of the Christian life, you with me? Now I understand that Christians can foul up. I'm one, I do. I understand that. And I could be somewhat tolerant of blowing it in a Christian's life. And that's true of Paul, even though the Corinthians messed up they at least were saved, right? But you see the error of the Galatians was on the very doctrine of salvation itself. You can mess up in your Christian life and still be secure, right? You mess up the doctrine of salvation, and you've damned yourself. That's the point. He can be tolerant and loving of certain things within the framework of the Christian life, and he can, in a sense understand them though he despises sin. But he has absolutely nothing to commend when the doctrine of salvation is adulterated. You know even in a Christian's life, when a Christian fouls up there are some things to be thankful for, right? You could be thankful for the past, ha, if you happen to be fouled up in the present, or you could be thankful for the future, or you could be thankful that even though it God is disciplining you and teaching you. But to say to somebody, I know you've messed up on the doctrine of salvation but I'm thankful for, thankful for what? If you've messed up there, there's nothing to be thankful for. And so he says nothing about commendation at all in Galatians, in fact he just starts in, in absolute astonishment in verse 6, listen to...and it's astonishment over how legalism had messed them up. "I marvel (I am amazed he says, astonished) that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel," He says, I, I, I am shocked, I am astonished, and the interesting thing here is, that you know all these churches in Galatia, they were Paul's own churches. He had started them. And in fact he had just gotten back from there to Antioch and in just a little while after that he gets the word that the Judaizers, the circumcision party have gone to Galatia and have given out the information that every Gentile's got to become a Jew, his salvation is no good by grace, he's got to get circumcised and keep the law of Moses. And you know what? A lot of them bought the baloney that the Judaizers were propagating. And he heard about it, and he was shook up. And so he doesn't bother about commendation. You say, well he's kind of intolerant, I mean that's coming down like

that, bang, well he could say a few nice things, that of course some people think Paul was intolerant anyway, but he wasn't. He has the right spirit about many things, most things.

Philippians 1, there's a few times when he was intolerant; we'll go into those some other occasion in the book of Acts. Philippians 1:15 let me show you a little about the tolerance of the man, he could tolerate some things. He says in verse 15 of Philippians 1, "Some indeed, preach Christ even of envy and strife and some of good will. You know there are some people who preach Christ, in verse 16 contentiously. They just, they really are preaching Christ but, on, on the surface, but underneath they're really trying to knock somebody else's ministry, You know about those kind? There's plenty of them. And they're not really sincere. And what they were doing to Paul was they were saying, well Paul's getting what he deserved. Getting their...he was a prisoner here. But he says, they want to add affliction to my bonds. They just want to, they don't they criticize my ministry. If you have a ministry that's being criticized you can side up to Paul and say, hey, I'm in your boat, he's been there. "The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: (he says) the other, of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel.

(Some people are preaching Christ and, and commending me knowing I'm preaching Christ, and set for the defense of the gospel, But he says, look) What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in that I do (what?) rejoice." Now that's a tolerant man. That's a tolerant man, that's a sweet spirit of a man. Why, he says Christ is getting the publicity, I'm happy for that. He's not intolerant, but listen friends, there are certain issues of which he's absolutely intolerant, one of those is messing up the doctrine of salvation. Now he could tolerate certain problems within the ministry, certain problems in the Christian's life, but he can't tolerate fouling up the doctrine of salvation. Paul wouldn't tolerate adulteration of the doctrine of salvation, so he just moves in, notice what he says, "I'm amazed that you are so soon removed." Hardly any time had gone by.

Now the word removed is a very interesting thing. It's a middle present in the Greek. But there are really three things to consider when you're talking about uh, voice, active, passive, you know about those, active you did the action, passive it was done to you, and middle. And middle means you did it to yourself, it's reflexive. I hit myself or whatever, I said to myself, anything that's reflexive. Now what it's really saying is a middle voice, "I marvel that you are so soon in the process of removing yourselves." They had been offered a grace salvation, here it was, these guys came along and gave them a law salvation, they originally were here but they were removing themselves to over here. He says, I can't believe this, now watch, not removing yourselves from a, from a gospel, but removing yourselves from "Him that called you." They were removing themselves from God. My friend, when you ever add anything to grace, you remove yourself from God, did you get that? You cannot be saved any other way than by grace. To add to it is to remove yourself from God. And here these folks were some of them not yet saved but looking at the salvation of grace and already they moved off to legalism. So soon. And the Greek word ??? which is translated removed means to transfer your

allegiance. It's used in military sense of a turncoat or a deserter. They were spiritual turncoats, they were religious deserters. And they didn't like the statement it is finished, they thought it ought to be we are finished. They needed to add to the work of Christ. And in Galatians 5:2 he says it as clearly as it could be said, watch this now, Galatians 5:2, "Behold I, Paul, say unto you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." In other words, if you go get circumcised so that you can be saved you have wiped out grace, right? Because you've done it in an effort to save yourself.

"For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he's a debtor to do the whole law." If you're going to go the law bit, you've got to keep every law, and do it all the time, all your life, perfectly. "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: you are fallen (what?) from grace." You have removed yourselves.

You, a man can't be saved by works. That is clear, and when you try to, you render the work of Christ ineffective and you remove yourself from God. And you know some people think oh why, when I do this I get closer to God, huumm, you don't. You get further from God. The only way you can come to God is crawling on your stomach, a humble sinner like the publican who said, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner," and smote upon his breast. That's the only way you'll ever come to God, he says now, "You've been removed unto another gospel, which is not another." Oh, that's a good one in the Greek. Two words for another and both are used here.

The first one, "you have been removed unto another gospel," is heteros.

It means another of a different kind. Heterogeneous opposite of homogeneous, same kind, "You have been removed unto another kind of gospel, which is not another," different word, allos. Allos means another of the same kind. If I said give me another paper, heteros and held this up you would give me any paper, if I said give me allos paper, you'd have to give me one exactly like this, a bulletin with all the same wrinkles and same little marks and everything, same kind. Now he uses that, that word in verse 7, he says, you have been removed unto a different kind of gospel, which is not the saving kind, do you see? Oh yeah, I know some have troubled you and perverted the gospel of Christ. And you know what the argument is, well they're so spiritual, oh they do so much good, the false prophets' oh yeah sure. Oh they're such nice talk about God and, and Jesus. Yeah, real good, Paul knows that. He says, "But though we, you get that? Don't come to somebody and say, well they're such wonderful people, that's what people always say about certain cults, particularly Mormons, oh but they're such nice people, of course. Of course that's the subtlety, and some of them are good people, believe me, from the standpoint of God they are nothing but sinners, vile and without forgiveness. And diabolical when they begin to propagate. "Though we, or, and if that isn't enough, "an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel than that which we preached unto you, let him be (what?) accursed." Anathema, and from the original Hebrew, herem, which means something devoted to God for preservation or destruction, it can go either way and here it's destruction. Something in the hand of God to be destroyed. Let them be destroyed, you can't add to God's truth, read Revelation 22, you

add to it, you be added the plagues, you take away and you'll be taken away out of the tree of life. Legalism is a damnable heresy, and he repeats twice verses 8 and 9 the very same curse.

But you know that's how most people think you get saved, did you know that? Sure, by works. I, I flew to Fresno for a pastors' conference on Monday, and I was coming back and I parked my car in one of those parking places outside the airport, you know, where you can leave it a couple days, they have a discount for preachers, aha. And uh, and in addition to parking your car they wash it and deliver it for you when your plane arrives, it's really kind of a nice service. Well anyway there's always somebody who comes to get you when your plane comes in, you make a little phone call and th, get your bag and then they have your car all ready and they wash it and everything. So this lady came and picked me up at the airport in this car dri, uh, just a lady who drives for that company I guess, and I got in the car and she said' uh, good afternoon sir, I trust you had a good uh, trip, and I said, oh it fin., She, and then she said some sexually off color remark, you know, I suppose that's what goes on, you know, and she just looked at me like so many guys who go away uh, you know, that assuming that you're a businessman out of town or whatever, you just kind of live it up, and she made a crack like that. And I said to her, I said, well uh, I'm a minister of Jesus Christ, huuuuuh, you know, see. And immediately, I never said one more word, it took about two minutes to drive to the airport, I never said one more word, immediately she says, I don't smoke.

Well, I said, gee that's terrific, then she said, I don't drink, and I, I, in fact I don't take any kind of drugs. She said, you know I read in the paper, and she kept talking and talking and talking, and she was in the process of justifying herself, see? And I, and she said, oh, I read about kids taking drugs, and this kid who was on drugs, did you hear about the shooting at the airport, she said. The day before I got there, those guys were high on drugs, I have never touched drugs. And then she said, I cuss a little. But she said, only to my horses. And I, I couldn't say anything, I just a-umm-umm, you know? But you know, and I never did get to say anything. We, by that time we pulled in the driveway and the man...she jumped out of the car to take somebody somewhere and that was it, But all that time she was justifying herself by her works. But you know it was ridiculous, it was abso...it was so stupid that you laughed at it. That's how stupid it was, I don't smoke, drink, take pot, and I only cuss at horses, therefore, you know. But you know in one form or another...you know some of you say that's a rather simplistic view of salvation, yes, and it's no more erroneous than the most complicated religious system in the world, it's the same error exactly, do you see? You can look at some religious systems that have to, you have do this and this and this and this, and give your money and sell your soul to this outfit, and you've got to go through all kinds of rigmarole, and it may be super complicated, it is just as idiotic, it is just as damning. Anything that confuses grace is the same error.

Well so that's a serious error, let's go back to Acts 15, some other time I'll preach on the rest of Galatians 1. Now in verse 25, he gives the decision of the council, he begins to give it. He says in the first part of the letter as we read that this council has been aware of the fact that some people have been messing up your minds, you Gentiles and we want you to know you're our brothers, and "It

seemed good to us, (verse 25) being assembled with one accord, (and there's that beautiful thing again, that when they met they were in one accord, why? Because the Holy Spirit superintended each individual, they collectively had the mind of the Spirit. Alright, we decided not only to send letter, not only to send Judas and Silas, send with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Let me give you that again. "It seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul." We're going to send the letter and the men, and then notice this thing, the one word beloved is a very important word because it gives an indication of how they felt about Barnabas and Paul who were ministers to the Gentiles, but the key is verse 26, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now there is the greatest commendation that you could ever give to somebody. The word hazard means to hand over, to literally give up your life for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you know, they did that, and we've been reading, I'm not even going to go over the scriptures, but we've been reading earlier in the book of Acts how that Paul and Barnabas did this. Remember the Galatian tour, how they were constantly under the pressure, chapter 13 verse 5, chapter 14 verse 19, there's where Paul was stoned and left for dead. And the pattern of their lives was always a willingness to suffer for Christ. Paul especially was always laying his life on the line. Willing to do that, his whole life was one dangerous adventure. And that's true of Peter, it was true of John, it was true of Stephen. You say, oh MacArthur those people are professional sufferers. Those guys are in the ministry, you guys are supposed to suffer, hunh. I'm just a plain old man, I, I'm a layman.

Well, let me show you a layman, look at Philippians 2, I want you to meet a dear layman, I, I don't know a lot about him, there's not a lot about him in scripture but I know a little about him, tells me something of what he was like. His name was Epaphroditus, Epaphroditus. Philippians 2:25, and I want you just meet a layman, just the average run of the mill layman in the early church, and I want you to see what kind of a man he was. Now Paul is writing to the Christians at Philippi, Epaphroditus came from the Philippian church, he came to minister to Paul, Paul was a prisoner in Rome, in his...in a house there, chained to a soldier, he was writing back and he had just reflecting on the ministry that Epaphroditus had had with him.

He said, "I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus," he's now sent him back, apparently with the letter, "my brother, my companion in labor, and fellow soldier," oh, what a commendation for a layman, you see the ascending scale? First of all he says, my brother, that's common sympathy, then he says, my companion in labor, that's common work, then he says, my fellow soldier, that's common danger. And the ascending scale of the worthwhile character of Epaphroditus is indicated right there, "and he's your messenger, and him that ministered to my need."

In other words, the Philippians sent this guy on behalf of their church, to minister to his need, and oh, what a man he was. Brother, companion and co-worker, fellow soldier. Now let me tell you something more about him. Verse 26. He longed after you all, oh he was full of heaviness, because you had

heard that he had been sick." The word got back to Philippi Epaphroditus is really sick. They never got the word that he got better, and so Epaphroditus was concerned that they were going to worry and pray and fret over his illness, not knowing that he'd been made well. Verse 27, "For, indeed, he was sick," how sick? "Near unto death, but God had mercy on him;" oh the kindness of God, "and not on him only, but on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." You know why God let Epaphroditus get well? Because He was merciful to Epaphroditus and He was merciful to Paul. Paul loved Epaphroditus. Do you know some people get well because God knows that some would sorrow over much if they were to die? That's His kindness. That's His kindness. So 28, "I sent him, therefore, the more eagerly that, when you see him again, you may rejoice," and you'll find out he's well, and then, "I'll be the less sorrowful. Receive him, therefore, in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such a man in reputation." Why, honor that man, oh what a ministry he had to me. Then listen to this, verse 30, why are you going to honor him? "Because, for the work of Christ, he was near unto (what?) death, not regarding his life," The literal Greek he gambled with his life, when he shouldn't have been doing what he was doing, he was deathly sick, he did it anyway and gambled with his life. You say, oh, isn't that wonderful? We ought to give our lives to seek the lost. That's good, we should. We ought to give our lives to reach the unsaved. This guy gave his life, to supply your lack of service toward (whom?) me."

You ever heard of losing your life for the fellowship of another believer? You say, that's a whole new ball game isn't it John? Yes. Oh, we talk about and so and so went out and gave his life to reach the unsaved, and so and so went out and gave his life to minister to the needs of a Christian brother? That kind of ministry then is pretty serious stuff, isn't it? People say, well, I don't know whether I ought to do anything, I just come and look around a lot, listen. Some people in this world are giving their lives for the sake of the ministry to others. Do you know in the body the ministry of the body is critical, is it not? We think that if, well, I'd do that except it's going to mean that I'll have to give up Tuesday afternoon, or well, I'll have to cut out my such and such on Saturday or. And some people are giving their lives. You say, well if it was to reach the lost but oh, you know, it's just that thing there.

Some people are giving their lives to minister to believers, to believers.

You say, believers must need to be ministered to, that's right, that's right. And don't ever minimize it. Epaphroditus gambled with his life just...you say, well what did Paul need? The guy knew everything, the guy had a direct line to God, I mean he was getting straight stuff, right?

Revelation. I mean he was super, super adequate. What does he need with little old Epaphroditus hanging around? I mean especially if he's going to die over the deal. Well, you don't understand the importance of ministering. And sometimes the people who are the highest up are the loneliest, right? Those who give the most get the least. Well he became very ill and plus the pressure of being in Rome, and hanging around with a condemned criminal, wasn't real good for your health. You say, well what makes guys, go back to Acts 15, sometime I'll preach on the rest of that chapter too. Acts

15. You say, what makes somebody hazard his life, I mean what makes somebody put his life on the line, like that? And so many of those guys did that in the early church, and it's hard for us to understand. What makes them do it? Let me give you some simple reasons. Number one, for the benefit of others. I'll give you five, and then a sixth, which is the key one.

For the benefit of others, you see some people are lost in the care of others. Why did Epaphras gamble with his life? For whose sake? Paul's sake, Uh, why does Paul go into town and preach Christ when they tell him they're going to kill him if he does? For the sake of those who will believe. So for the sake of unbelievers and the sake of believers, some people are willing to give their life. So I say first of all, the motive for being fearless that we see in the New Testament is the benefit of others. Some people really care about others, to the place where they don't care about their own lives. Paul says, if I be offered on the sacrifice of your joy, I rejoice. Secondly, I believe they were fearless because they wanted the knowledge of Christ. How many times do you feel the heart of Paul saying, I just want to know Christ deeper, I just want to experience the fellowship of His what? Of His sufferings, I just want to bear in my body the marks of Jesus Christ, Galatians, at the end. Or he says, I am really taking the blows meant for Christ, Colossians 1:??, That I may know Him fully in every way, that I may experience all that there is of what he took, the rebuke that was his. I believe they suffered first of all for the benefit of others.

Secondly, for the deep knowledge of Christ. Thirdly, I think they suffered because of the continuity of life. I love this, Romans 14 and uh, just three verses, verses 7 to 9, I'll read them to you, listen, "None of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself, For whether we live, we live unto the Lord: and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are (what?) the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, rose, and revived, that He might be the Lord of the dead and the living." Now what is he saying? He's saying this, what does it matter if I am alive or dead, I am the Lord's anyway. This is what I call continuity of life. When you understand the continuity of eternal life you have no fear of death, when you have no fear of death you're willing to stick your neck out, right? If you see death as a great giant monster on the road of life that is going to consume you in some horrible thing, well of course you're going to be afraid. If you see death as the release of all your hang ups and freeing you to experience all that God has it's a different story. You know Paul didn't see death. He saw, here's Paul before, Paul gets saved and eternally this is Paul, death was no big deal. He saw the continuity of eternal life. Death didn't stop that, death didn't intrude on it, death didn't do anything to it. It was like driving down the highway, some people look at death as if it were a 25 foot concrete slab right in their lane.

Other people look at death as a signpost on the side that says, you have now entered heaven, ha, ha, see? Quite a difference, quite a difference.

And when you see the continuity of life and you don't fear death, if you're Christ's you're His forever. If you don't fear death then you don't fear fooling around on the edge of death, or gambling with your

life and if you don't fear that you're willing to stick your neck out a little bit, right? Then there's a fourth one, I think they suffered a lot because of a desire for heaven, I don't think they cared if they died. I think that they just figured it would be better to do that anyway, so let's do it and if we get killed hurrah. Why Paul said to the in chapter one,

Philippians you're nice folks and I like you a lot, better to be with Christ.

So it was because of the benefit of others, the knowledge of Christ, the continuity of life and the desire for heaven that they were so willing to suffer. Fifthly, because of obedience. They...they obeyed the, the principles that Christ had left them. You know what Peter said? "Hereunto were you called to suffer for him." Stick your neck out, suffering is a part of the process. You remember chapter 5 of Peter? He says to the elders, "After you have suffered awhile, God will establish you, and settle you." Now those are wonderful reasons to suffer, oh, benefit of others, the knowledge of Christ, the continuity of life, the desire for heaven and obedience. Let me give you the best one, those aren't even the best. Ready for this? Go to verse 26, these men hazarded their lives for the best reason, here it is, "For the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." You say, what does that mean? Isn't that just that general deal that you see in the Bible, little general thing, for the name of the Lord Jesus? No. You know what it means? It means this, anytime you see this, for the name, or the sake of the name, it means in response to what He deserves, right? The name means all that He is.

What it means is this, now get this, this is really, this is valuable, they were willing to suffer to protect the honor of Jesus Christ. Did you get that? Because of the name, because of all that He was, they wouldn't stand around and let anything defame His name. You know why Paul went into a town and got so uptight and preached, even when he knew he might die. I'll tell you why, because somebody was defaming the character of God. Do you say anything? Do you love His name? Romans 1:5, they sent out Apostles for the sake of the name. Third John 7, they sent out messengers for the sake of the name. Acts 5:41, they came back and said, oh we were so happy we were counted worthy to suffer for what? For the sake of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? If He is being defamed we ought to move in there and stand up for His honor, and if we suffer for it, praise the Lord that's standing for the sake of His name.

How do you feel about the name of Christ? After the morning service a girl came to me and she said, you know my, my mother uses that name in vain all the time, so forth, what should I do? I said, you oughta stand for the honor of His name. Dr. Feinberg used to tell me that whenever anybody would use the name of Christ in vain, he'd always say, oh are you a preacher? And somebody would say, you, no, no, no, no whatever gave you that idea? Well, you just talk about the Lord a lot, and then he would proceed to witness. I hope you're, I hope you're jealous for His name.

Henry Martyn when he went to India had that experience. He said he was absolutely filled with horror when he saw Indians worshiping other than Jesus Christ. It absolutely tore him up, and he came out

and he said, I cannot endure existence if Jesus is dishonored. Do you feel like that? You ought to be jealous for God. Oh, I love what the psalms...psalmist said in Psalm 115:1 he says, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory." And God is a jealous God, Exodus 34 tells us that God is a jealous God, His name is jealousy. You say, well how can God be jealous, that's a sin. It's not a sin, jealousy is neutral, it can be a sin if you're jealous of your neighbor's wife, if you're jealous of your neighbors job, his position, his money, his car, his house, that's jealousy that's sin. If you're jealous for the honor and the purity of your wife, that's not sin. If you're jealous for the care and protection of your children that's not sin, if you're jealous for the sacred name of God and the honor of Jesus Christ that's good. Some of us Christians need to get a little more jealous of the things of Christ, and a little less jealous for the stuff that we've got that doesn't matter, right? We're so jealous for our ego that we would never set it aside, for the sake of Christ. Well, the sake of His name. You know what Jesus said? He put it this way Matthew 10:39, "He that find it; but he that loseth his life (watch this, eth his life shall lose three words) for My sake, shall find it." If you died fighting for the integrity and the honor of the name of God, you have really lived. Oh, when you hear something that is not right and does not give honor to Jesus, do you stand up in honor of His name? Well, that's a footnote, let's go to verse 27.

What a commendation of Paul and Barnabas, Verse 27 they said, "well we not only sent them, we sent Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth." These were the two Jewish fellows from the Jerusalem Church, wonderful that they sent them along to confirm the testimony. "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us," now there's the key to their success. If there's a meeting that comes together and the end of the meeting is, we and the Holy Spirit agree, you got a good meeting, And that was the beauty of this unity because they were all in the Holy Spirit, they were all filled with the Spirit. And so they said, "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us." Boy, I mean that's the key to the Christian life, isn't it? You know the Holy Spirit and I have decided, terrific, terrific. Usually it's I'm going to do this, I don't know what the Holy Spirit is thinking. Or I do and I'm not willing to admit it. So they were of one mind, simply because the Spirit was in control. We showed you that back in uh, verse 25, "They were assembled with one accord." Back in verse 22, "it pleased everybody." Well you know that a meeting that does that is going to be a meeting in the Spirit, and we talked about that last time. And so as they were plugged into the Holy Spirit...the Spirit you know was given to the church, Ephesians 2:22, the whole church is the habitation of the Spirit, He was in control of all of it. And they yielded to His control.

Well they gave their decision, "to lay upon you no greater burden."

We're not going to impose law on your grace. Only these necessary things "that you stay away from idols and fornication and strangled things and blood," which will offend the Jews. Don't do those. And he says, "From which, if you keep yourselves, you shall do well." In other words, if you don't do these things it will be to your benefit. Then he says, "Fare you well." The close of the letter.

So we've seen the dissension, the discussion and the decision.

Let's close with the development. What happened when they delivered the letter, and this is just a brief thought. "So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch." Now can't you imagine all these Gentiles up there waiting to hear whether their salvations any good? See? We had a lot of our insurance policies with Equity Funding, which went bankrupt, so you know, we hang around waiting to hear if our insurance is any good.

Can you imagine hanging around waiting to hear if your salvation's any good? And so they arrived back there, "and when they had gathered the multitude," and unfortunately the word multitude in English does not translate to Greek, the Greek word is, the fullness of the whole, w-h-o-l-e. What it means is everybody was there. This was a hot item, the whole church together, they delivered "When they gathered the fullness of the delivered the epistle." And can you imagine when they read this? We are going to lay no burden on you, your grace is valid, and, and they said, is this for sure, for sure? And Paul and Barnabas, for sure, for sure, Judas and Silas, this is it, this is it. Only thing...a few things you've got to remember, don't do these few things because you will offend the Jews. Oh, terrific, terrific, great thing. What were the four responses? Watch this, first of all consolation. Verse 31, "When they read, they rejoiced for the consolation." You know what the word means in Greek? Comfort, its paraklet, comforter. They, you know grace is comforting, isn't it? How would you like to have to keep your salvation by works? Would you be comforted in that? I don't think so. You couldn't be comforted. Grace is comforting, there's no comfort in legalism just guilt, fear, threat, look at the Old Testament, they never, ever knew the comfort of the peace of conscience. Remember in Hebrews, they never had that purged conscience, never had comfort. Grace alone brings comfort. That's a benediction Paul gives in Second Thessalonians 2:16, he says, "The Lord Jesus Christ himself, God our Father, who hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. You see, grace is the only thing that can give us that full comfort. Can you rest in law? Of course not. You say, oh, at last, I'm saved by my own works. What about tomorrow? You blow it and you're dead. But you can say, ahh, I can rest in grace, I'm redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, that settles it. I can get comforted in that.

Second thing was celebration, first was consolation, then celebration. Uh, it says in verse 31, "When they read it they rejoiced," I guess they would. Man, they were excited, salvation by grace! They were rejoicing and celebrating. There's no joy in legalism, believe me.

Look at Sinai, what came out of Sinai before the law? Thunder, smoke, fire, quaking of the ground. Now what comes before salvation? Listen to this, love this. "And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy." Before the law, thunder earthquake, lightning, smoke, Before the birth of the Savior, "I bring you tidings of great (what?) joy." There's no joy in legalism. So there was consolation and celebration, and I imagine they had some kind of sanctified

party? Verse 32, the third thing they had was confirmation, and by this I don't mean when you were 1. Verse 32, "And Judas and Silas, being prophets themselves," these prophets were ranked next to Apostles in the church in terms of importance, they spoke directly from God. "They exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them."

And after they had tarried a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles." These two guys stayed around long enough to teach those Gentiles, isn't that a beautiful picture of the unity of the church? A brother told me the other day who works in Jewish evangelism that in L.A. there are supposedly ten thousand Hebrew believers, and he estimates five hundred of them are in churches. Somehow there's a failure to, to mingle what the Lord designed to be one. They didn't have any problem with it. And their arms were open, and they had these two Jewish teachers from Jerusalem Church teaching them. Now the confirming them, they were in consolation, celebration and confirmation, and confirming means to build them up, epistrizo, comes from sterixs, which means a prop, to lean upon, they propped them up, they built them up. By teaching, there's only one thing that's able to build you up, what is that? Acts 20:32, "The word of his grace, which is able to build you up." Only grace builds you up. So grace is cause for consolation, celebration and confirmation. What does Peter say? "But grow in grace."

Well, lastly there was continuation. Look at verse 35, verse 34 isn't in the manuscripts. Apparently a scribe put it there, it says, it says it pleased Silas to abide there, Some scribe stuck that in because Silas is back in Antioch in Verse 40, and this scribe figured that if he left there, he'd have trouble getting him back in those verses in-between. But all you've got to do is leave a little time gap, no problem. So go to verse 35, "Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord, with many others also."

You know what happened? They just picked up where they left off. The continuation, when once the message of grace was established, away they went.

Let me tell you something, and I'll close with this thought, Satan must be getting very tired of having all of his plans reversed. Satan says, I'll move into the church with false doctrine, on the doctrine of salvation. What happened? As a result of his effort the church crystallized its doctrine. Satan says, I'll move in there and I'll split the Jews and Gentiles, as a result of his effort the Jew and the Gentile were blended together, in this chapter. Satan said, I'll halt the progress of the gospel, the crystallizing of the doctrine of salvation, the unity of the Jew and Gentile only sped the progress of the gospel.

Foiled again. Satan is so helpful, he sets up the most perfect circumstances for God to accomplish what He wants, I don't have it in me to thank him however. I do recognize that I thank God for twisting everything he does around, positive results.

Well, and they went about doing two things, teaching and preaching, evangelism and edification. Well there it is friends. The message came back and what happened? The church established the doctrine of salvation, picked up where it left off and took off in greater days than it had ever seen.

There's only one way to be saved, "For by grace are you saved through faith; that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God-Not of works, lest any man should boast." I trust you know that salvation today.

There's no other salvation, except in the name of Jesus Christ, and that alone. Let's pray.

Father we do thank You that our salvation is in Christ. We thank You for the overruling of the work of Satan, that brought all of these negative factors, the division between Jew and Gentile, the unclear statement of doctrine, the halting of the gospels spread, right into the focus of that council and as a result all of those things were enhanced. Father we know that You're in the business of making the wrath of men to praise You, of twisting around the worst and turning it into the best. Father we know You must be doing that a lot in our lives.

Lord, we would pray this morning for any who might be with us, dear ones visiting, who do not know our Christ, who have not come by grace through faith to the salvation that is offered in Him. Oh, Lord, God we pray that this might be the time of their salvation, that they might add nothing to the simple faith that is really an act of taking the gracious gift of Christ. And then Father, others who are believers, God help us to recognize that we are to be willing to stand up for Christ, to defend the honor of the blessed Lord and of the Father as well, in whatever case. And to look at our lives as expendable in every, in every way, for the sake of the Name, that it might be exalted. And Lord God we pray too that You might give us a vision, of being in grace and growing and ministering effectively. Help us to recognize the importance of this, that even though ours is grace, grace should compel us by love to serve, not only one another but those without Christ. We pray in Christ's name, Amen.

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