

The Message: “Christ Alone”

BIBLE PASSAGE: Acts 15:1-35

MAIN POINT: The church in Jerusalem encouraged Gentile believers.

KEY PASSAGE: Acts 1:8

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How do people hear about Jesus? God uses Christians to tell others about Jesus so they may repent and be saved.

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Paul and Barnabas had been sharing the gospel with many people—including Gentiles. But some people in the church began to teach that the Gentiles could not be saved unless they followed some of the same rules the Jews followed.

Paul and Barnabas disagreed, and the church leaders decided to meet in Jerusalem to talk about whether or not the Gentiles needed to obey the law of Moses. After a long discussion, Peter stood up and said to the group, “Brothers, God chose me to tell the good news to the Gentiles. They heard the good news, and they believed. God accepted them and gave them the Holy Spirit, just as He did for us.

“Why are you trying to make salvation harder for them? We know that we cannot obey God’s laws perfectly. No, we believe that the Jews and Gentiles are saved in the same way—by the grace of the Lord Jesus.”

Everyone in the group was quiet as Paul and Barnabas told them about all the things God had done through them when they were with the Gentiles. Then another apostle, James, spoke up. He pointed out that the words of the prophets showed that God wanted to save both Jews and Gentiles.

“I think we should not cause trouble for the Gentiles who have trusted in Jesus. Instead, let’s write them a letter telling them the things they should not do.”

So the church leaders wrote the letter to the Gentile believers. The letter also explained some things they should not do now that they were believers.

The leaders chose Judas and Silas to go to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas to deliver the letter. The believers in Antioch were encouraged by the letter. Judas and Silas stayed with them for awhile, and then they went home. Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch and taught believers and told other people the good news about Jesus.

Christ Connection: The church leaders met in Jerusalem to answer a tough question: Can a person be saved by faith alone or was something more needed? The early church agreed that because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, He alone is all we need to be saved.