

Clarifying God's Viral Message of Grace
Sermon # 15, Acts 15:1-35

Main Point: *We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to God's glory alone.*

Getting to Know You

1. What are some common beliefs in our world about how a person gets to heaven? What are the problems with a works based mindset?

Getting into the Book

Read 15:1-3

2. What controversy erupted in the church at Antioch? According to verse 24 how did this affect the believers? Tell the group about a time when your faith was shaken by someone teaching a "grace + works gospel."
3. How does Paul and Barnabas' reaction to this false teaching instruct us about defending the gospel?

Read 15:4-21

4. What cultural and religious tensions made this such a hot button issue?
5. Have someone summarize the significance of the story of Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10 & 11. With that background, what arguments did Peter present in favor of grace (15:7-11)?
6. What evidence did Paul and Barnabas present for salvation by grace (15:12)? What evidence did James present (15:13-18)?
7. If salvation is by grace alone, why did the Apostles and Elders give four prohibitions to the Gentile believers (15:20, 28-29)?
(Leader: these prohibitions are not for salvation. Gentiles and Jews are saved by grace alone. These prohibitions are meant for the Gentile believers to display 1. *Repentance* from their former idolatrous lifestyle, 2. *Unity* in the church, so as not to put a stumbling block in the way of Jewish background believers, 3. *A Pure Witness*, so as not to repel unbelieving Jews from coming to Jesus. ~ David Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles, Pillar New Testament Commentary*, p. 446)

Read 15:22-35

8. Would you have responded to the letter in the same way the church at Antioch did? Why or why not?

Getting Out There

9. Why do you think the viral message of grace is so hard for people to accept?
10. Role Play: How would you go viral with a friend who "hopes they're good enough to go to heaven"? Have one group member be the "viral agent" and the other play the friend.
11. Viral Report: Update the group on any viral opportunities you've had since you last met.
 - a. Have you been reaching up in prayer for three people to come to Christ?
 - b. Have you reached out to them in relationship?
 - c. Have you reached in with the gospel?

Reminder: If you have not done so, fill out a "My Faith Story" card and turn it in at church.

Pray

Praise God for His gospel of grace! Pray that your unbelieving friends will understand God's grace and trust Jesus.