

Devoted and Unshaken: The Book of Acts
"Grace Unites Us" (#16) Acts 15:1-35
Cornerstone Church of Poway
Pastor Ed Turley
August 10th, 2025

Sermon Notes

Big Idea: God's grace is the foundation of our salvation, the filter for our decisions, and the fuel for our unity.

1. God's Grace Is the Foundation of Salvation

While Paul and Barnabas were at **Antioch of Syria**, some men from Judea arrived and began to teach the believers: "**Unless** you are **circumcised** as required by the **law of Moses, you cannot be saved.**" ² Paul and Barnabas **disagreed** with them, arguing vehemently. Finally, the church decided to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, accompanied by some **local believers**, to talk to the apostles and elders about this question. ³ The church sent the delegates to Jerusalem, and they stopped along the way in **Phoenicia and Samaria** to visit the believers. They told them—much to everyone's joy—that **the Gentiles, too, were being converted.** ⁴ When they arrived in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Paul were **welcomed** by the whole church, including the apostles and elders. They reported everything God had done through them. ⁵ But then **some of the believers** who belonged to the sect of the **Pharisees** stood up and insisted, "The Gentile converts must be **circumcised** and required to **follow the law of Moses.**"

⁶ So the **apostles and elders met together** to resolve this issue. ⁷ At the meeting, after a **long discussion**, **Peter** stood and addressed them as follows: "Brothers, you all know that God chose me from among you some time ago to **preach to the Gentiles** so that they could **hear the Good News and believe.** ⁸ **God knows people's hearts**, and He **confirmed** that He accepts Gentiles by giving them the **Holy Spirit**, just as He did to us.

⁹ He made **no distinction** between us and them, for He **cleansed their hearts through faith.** ¹⁰ So why are you now **challenging God** by **burdening** the Gentile believers with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear? ¹¹ We believe that **we are all saved** the same way, **by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus.**"

Acts 15:1-11 (NLT2)

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. **Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT2)**

2. God's Grace Is the Filter for Our Decisions

¹² Everyone listened quietly as Barnabas and Paul told about the **miraculous signs and wonders** God had done through them among the Gentiles. ¹³ When they had finished, James stood and said, "Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴ Peter has told you about the **time God**

first visited the Gentiles to take from them a people for himself. ¹⁵ And this conversion of Gentiles is exactly what the prophets predicted. As it is written: ¹⁶ ‘Afterward I will **return and restore** the fallen house of David. I will rebuild its ruins and restore it, ¹⁷ so that the **rest of humanity might seek the LORD**, including the Gentiles— all those I have called to be mine. The LORD has spoken— ¹⁸ He who made these things known so long ago.’ ¹⁹ “And so my judgment is that we **should not make it difficult** for the Gentiles who are **turning to God**. ²⁰ Instead, we should write and tell them **to abstain from eating food offered to idols, from sexual immorality, from eating the meat of strangled animals, and from consuming blood**. ²¹ For these laws of Moses have been preached in Jewish synagogues in every city on every Sabbath for many generations.”
Acts 15:12-21 (NLT2)

3. God’s Grace Is the Fuel for Our Unity

²² Then the apostles and elders together with the whole church in Jerusalem chose delegates, and they sent them to Antioch of Syria with Paul and Barnabas to report on this decision. The men chosen were two of the church leaders—Judas (also called Barsabbas) and Silas. ²³ This is the letter they took with them: “This letter is from the apostles and elders, your brothers in Jerusalem. It is written to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Greetings! ²⁴ “We understand that some men from here have troubled you and upset you with their teaching, but we did not send them! ²⁵ So we decided, having come to **complete agreement**, to send you **official representatives**, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶ who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ We are sending Judas and Silas to **confirm** what we have decided concerning your question. ²⁸ “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay **no greater burden** on you than these few requirements: ²⁹ You must **abstain from eating food offered to idols, from consuming blood or the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality**. If you do this, you will do well. Farewell.”

³⁰ The messengers went at once to Antioch, where they called a general meeting of the believers and delivered the letter. ³¹ And there was **great joy** throughout the church that day as they read this encouraging message. ³² Then Judas and Silas, both being prophets, spoke at length to the believers, **encouraging and strengthening their faith**. ³³ They stayed for a while, and then the believers sent them back to the church in Jerusalem with a blessing of peace. **Acts 15:22-33 (NLT2)**

➤ **How can our church be a place where grace and unity thrive?**

My Next Right Step:

- [] I choose to trust Jesus today as my Lord and Savior
- [] I want to be baptized as a public declaration of faith.
- [] Sign up for a small group on Church App in August



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Talk It Over

Big Idea: God's grace is the foundation of our salvation, the filter for our decisions, and the fuel for our unity.

Icebreaker:

If someone asked you, "What does grace really mean?" how would you explain it?

Read Acts 15:1–11

1. Why do you think some believers wanted to require circumcision for Gentiles to be saved?

2. Read verse 11. What stands out to you about Peter's statement: "We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved"?

3. How have you personally struggled with feeling like you have to "earn" God's love or salvation?

4. Where in your life do you need to trade self-effort for resting in grace?

Read Acts 15:12–21

5. How did James help the church navigate disagreement? What can we learn about using Scripture and spiritual wisdom to make decisions?

6. What are some modern issues in the church where grace should be our filter?

7. What would change in your decision-making if you consistently asked: “Will this build others up and bring unity?”

Read Acts 15:22–35

8. How did the church communicate their decision to the Gentile believers? What was the result?

9. Why do grace-filled decisions often lead to peace and joy?

10. Who in your life needs a word of encouragement, understanding, or grace this week?

11. How can our group be a place where grace and unity thrive?

12. What is one takeaway from Acts 15 that you want to apply this week?

Close in prayer: