

“Sola Fide”
“...By faith alone...”
Acts 15:1-21, ESV

Introduction: The text before us this morning is truly historic. That is no exaggeration; that is the truth. One of the first and most crucial questions faced by the early church leaders was: How is a person made right with God? In fact, the material cause of the Reformation was the question of justification. This issue touches at the very core and heart of the Christian faith! This is a crucial text of Scripture in the book of Acts and in the whole counsel of Scripture.

Key Takeaway: Salvation is totally, completely by grace through faith in **Christ**.

Key Issue at Hand: How does one enter the Kingdom of heaven? How is a person made right with God? What must a person do to be saved? The issue was whether Gentiles needed to become Jews and follow Jewish ceremonial laws in order to be Christians.

The Key Assertion:

The Judaizers’ assertion is articulated in **verse 1**: *“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”*

Some vigorously disagreed (v. 2).

Some vigorously agreed (v. 5).

Peter Speaks: (v. 7-11)- One of the greatest defenses of salvation by grace through faith alone in Holy Scripture.

- ❖ God saved Gentiles without a requirement of circumcision, law-keeping, or ritual.
- ❖ If God did not require any additional qualifications for salvation, neither should the legalists.
- ❖ God gave them the Holy Spirit, and made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith (v. 8-9).
- ❖ Why ask them to bear a load EVEN YOU are unwilling to carry? (v. 10).

Peter’s precise theological position stated clearly in verse 11: *“But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”*

Paul & Barnabas Speak (v. 12)- They testify of God’s work among the Gentiles on their first missionary journey.

James Speaks (v. 13-21)- Essentially, “If Gentiles can be saved without becoming Jews in the kingdom, there is no need for Gentiles to become proselytes in the present age.”

The Conclusion of the

Jerusalem Council: Keeping the law and observing rituals were not requirements for salvation (v. 19).

James proposed (v. 19-20): Gentiles abstain from pagan idolatrous practices: abstain from food offered to idols, abstain from anything having to do with idols, abstain from sexual immorality, dietary restrictions [these abstentions would aim to avoid offending the Jews].

BOTTOM LINE: God makes no distinction believing Jews and Gentiles. All are accepted by faith in Jesus. Salvation for anyone—Jew or Gentile—is by God’s grace (v. 11) and by faith (v. 9).