

# **“Saved the Same Way!”**

*Acts 15 (15:1-11)*

**Intro.** – Acts 15 deals with what is called *The Jerusalem Conference*. In short, there were those (Judaizers) who were teaching that circumcision and keeping the Law of Moses were necessary in addition to the grace of God in order for Gentiles to be forgiven/saved. Paul, Barnabas and certain others “went up to Jerusalem” to the apostles and elders concerning “this issue.” After “much debate” it was stated in no uncertain terms, **“...we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in the same way as they also are.”**

Now with all that as background, let me use the following illustration to help introduce the direction and purpose behind this text of God’s Word.

Imagine with me a Kingdom ruled by a loving/gracious King. In this Kingdom (“The Kingdom of Love and Light”) the citizens are happy/content people who are being provided for and protected by the Great King. In response, the servants were to rely on the Great King and obey His desires for them.

All know, however, there is an Enemy Kingdom across the sea. Rumors of untold prosperity and freedom abound. It’s agents constantly are urging the servants of the Great King to defect and join them, offering convenient transportation on clandestine ships. Many are seduced by this offer and choose to leave the Kingdom of Love and Light for the rival shores. They arrive with great expectations and at first all seems great. But it doesn’t take long to realize there is an emptiness/hollowness living in the Enemy Kingdom.

Then, they discover the truth. Life in the Enemy Kingdom is a lie. The real situation is fearful and grim. The Enemy King is a merciless and cruel tyrant. Everyone living in the Enemy Kingdom is actually his slave.

Ah, but there is good news! The Great King knows the situation of everyone who has defected to the Enemy Kingdom. And even though *all* have rejected and rebelled against the Great King, He wants them back! So at great personal expense, the Great King constructed a fleet of ships. These ships offer a FREE shuttle back to the Kingdom of Love and Light. There is always one of these ships anchored offshore of the Enemy Kingdom waiting. A loud speaker pleads for *whosoever will* to come back to the Great King. The loud speaker broadcasts clear and simple instructions on how to escape the Enemy King and how to get on the rescue ship.

The main elements of this illustration should be obvious: the Great King = Jesus our Lord/Savior; Enemy King = Satan; those seduced by Enemy King are sinners; fleet of rescue ships = redemption through Christ.

You see, the Gospel of Jesus Christ must include not only an explanation about His redemptive work (the work alone that makes salvation possible) but also instructions on HOW sinners may *access* this salvation. Without these instructions the redemptive work of Christ would be in vain.

Acts 15 makes this so clear. Jews were insisting the Gospel was not enough – that the observance of the Law was also necessary to be saved. The resulting instructions makes clear we are all saved the same way:

*Purpose: to reiterate the fact that those who are saved are saved by GRACE alone*

It would be futile for Jesus to provide redemption and then NOT tell us how to receive this gift. J. Cottrell likens such to being a heart patient with several prescriptions. The pharmacist shakes all the prescriptions together, hands them to you and says, “Good luck!” The instructions on how to be saved are just as important as salvation itself!

## **I Saved BY GRACE**

- the Gospel is “Good News” – how salvation is accomplished through Christ alone (Acts 4:12) “*And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.*”
- the Gospel is also “Good News” about how this salvation can be received by sinners – specific instructions as to *how* one does this is in the book of Acts:

### **A. The God of Grace**

1. The most amazing thing about salvation is that God WANTS to offer it to you, me and all...
2. Fact that God wants to save us and has done everything to make it so shows there is something about His nature far different than the pagan concepts of God.

3. Typical unbelievers think of God in one of two ways:
  - a. stern, strict, demanding, severe, full of wrath...
  - b. kind, loving, merciful and forgiving...
4. What's the problem with these? In the world's eyes God's character is one or the other, but, not both of these... Why? The two are NOT compatible.
5. Both DO apply to God, but, when sin enters through our freewill, these two sides of God are in conflict with the other:
  - a. when confronted with sin, God's holiness/righteousness breaks into wrath (Hebrew 12:29) "*For our God is a consuming fire.*"
  - b. yet at the same time His loving nature expresses itself as a desire to save His enemy = grace
6. How does God resolve this conflict/tension and remain true to His holiness and grace? By pouring His wrath upon God the Son as the perfect substitute.
  - Illus. – the side of the Cross that faces God absorbs His wrath; the side that faces you and me pours forth His grace.

The *Good News* is NOT that God has no wrath... but that the God of wrath is also the God of grace!

#### B. The Call to Grace

1. Isaiah 65:1-2 expresses what's so amazing about the grace of God. Though we have sinned He still wants us back. "*I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me. I said, 'Here am I, here am I,' to a nation which did not call on My name. I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts.*"
2. The call of grace is twofold:
  - a. to turn away from sin (repentance) = admission to awfulness of our sin and opening our eyes to the seriousness of sin and to begin to *hate* it like God hates sin...
  - b. to turn toward God = faith... the book of Acts full of *turn to the Lord* passages.
3. Call to grace not just another demand, but, an open invitation to turn away from sin and to God!

#### C. The Content of Grace

1. When called to turn away from sin and turn toward God, what will sinners receive if they respond?
2. The double cure:
  - a. cancellation of sins, guilt and the penalty for them.
  - b. set free from spiritual bondage to life long process begins with act called *regeneration* and continues with *sanctification* (growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ).

Saved by grace is a promise and hope we must understand better and better. In our Illus. it is the explanation behind the fleet of ships sent to rescue *whosoever will*.

## II Saved By Grace THROUGH FAITH

- faith in God's Word is the necessary MEANS of receiving saving grace.
- this necessity is presented clearly in every account of salvation recorded in Acts (13:39; 16:31; 18:8)

#### A. Faith is Believing

1. Assenting (accepting) facts/truth of the *essentials* concerning the Gospel – 1 Corinthians 15:3-4...
2. Such *faith* is an act of intellect and will responding to the sufficiency of the evidence...

#### B. Faith is Trusting

1. Trusting God enough to rely and hope in His Word alone.
2. Such faith must always be directed toward Jesus the Christ.

In our Illus. faith is first believing the message being broadcast over the ship's loudspeaker is true – Great King still loves you and wants you back... But just believing isn't sufficient, faith also includes personal decision to act, to forsake the Enemy King, place the future in the hands of Great King and board His ship!

## III Saved By Grace Through Faith AT BAPTISM

- A. Christian Baptism is
1. It is immersion in water – Greek word baptize = bury, immerse, bury
  2. It is immersion of a repentant believer = i.e. those old enough to understand sin and the gospel message of grace.
    - why we don't practice sprinkling, pouring, or any other mode of "baptism" or infant "bapt"
  3. Vital part of apostles' presentation of the Gospel:
    - a. Peter – Acts 2:38
    - b. Paul – Acts 22:16 told by Ananias to arise and be immersed...
    - c. Cornelius, Philipians jailer, Lydia etc.
  4. Philip and the Eunuch = Philip preached Gospel and revealed the proper response to receive this marvelous gift of salvation – never earned always received as a gift!

Immersion is an essential part of the Gospel message!

- B. Part of the Turning Process
1. Just as faith is an attitude of the heart that causes one to turn to God for salvation, baptism is the point/event/time one receives the gift of grace.
  2. It is the lasting significance that every NT passage dealing with immersion, points to this being THE OCCASION of salvation... without exception!
  3. The view that immersion is contrary to salvation by grace, is in serious error identifying baptism as a human work.
    - a. o, baptism is a work – a work of God (Colossians 2:12 etc.)
    - b. Martin Luther said correctly: "Baptism is a work, but, it is God's work, not man's"

**Conclusion:** We began with this illustration, now I want to summarize and conclude by using this account.

In this illustration there is a rescue ship anchored offshore. When the stranded rebels realize their plight... turn to God... believe Him... and heed the message on the ship's loudspeaker system... These make their move to enter this ship, but they must go out into the water to reach it. As they go out into the water, they step off the shore of the Enemy's Kingdom. When they come up out of the water, they enter into the Kingdom of Love and Light.

Are you saved? Are you saved BY GRACE, THROUGH FAITH, AT BAPTISM? Please note all who will be saved will be saved the same way!