

## A Gospel Community Acts 15

Last Week: Gospel Proclamation will often be met with Gospel Resistance.

This Week: Gospel Proclamation will often result in a Gospel Community.

A gospel community puts the gospel on display for a watching world to see and is characterized by the following attributes...

God-exalting, Christ-admiring, Spirit-filled, Bible-enjoying, grace-preaching, convenience-defying, Cross-embracing, risk-taking, selfishness-crucifying, gossip-silencing, prayer-saturated, future-thinking, outward-reaching, and beautifully human congregations where the underserving can thrive. (John Piper)

Two very important words to help you understand Acts 15:

**Justification** – Just as if you lived the perfect life that Jesus lived, you are declared righteous by God.

**Adoption** - You are adopted into the family of God at the moment of salvation.

You might be someone who has a tendency to receive the gospel as a free gift but then spend the rest of your life working to please God. If that's the case, you have misunderstood the terms of the gospel. Be careful not to change the terms of gospel from relationship to performance.

We are all saved the same way. We are all sinners saved by the grace of God expressed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have all been adopted into God's family. It's no longer us and them. It's just us.

Here's some evaluation to help you discern if you have any legalism in your thinking:

*As you observe people in life, is there anyone that you know who is so far removed from Christianity and Christian values and Christian lifestyle that you think he or she will never become a Christian?*

It's possible for Christians to apply a standard of righteousness that is not found in the gospel. It's possible for a Christian to choose in their minds who is ready for salvation based on external performance. That is legalistic. Here's a lesson from Acts 15:

***When Jesus Christ died and rose again the label of Jewish became a nonissue.***

A second and very important lesson from Acts 15 has to do with the willingness of Jewish Christians to no longer insist on their Jewish ways in order to be considered fully Christian.

**What this council was saying was this:** We are willing to be no longer Jewish Christians so that we can join with you in simply being Christian. They dropped the Jewish label. From here on out, it's just Christian.

The goal of discipleship is not to make people become more like you but more like Jesus.

**Home Group Questions:**

1. As you read Acts 15 and listened to the teaching on Sunday, was there anything that stood out to you?
2. With whom do you identify more – the Jewish Christians or the Gentile Christians? Why?
3. You may have heard Pastor Karl talk us through an evaluation tool for legalism. Do you sometimes consider specific people as “more lost” than others? On what basis do you reach that conclusion? Is there a Biblical basis for supporting the idea that some people are more lost than others?
4. How does it make you feel when you consider your adoption by God? You are a child of God.
5. Did the release of rights challenge you? Do any of those stand out as particularly bothersome? Can you see how the Jewish Christians released their rights in order to fully receive their new brothers and sisters in Christ? What does that example do for you?

## RELEASE OF RIGHTS

We live in a world that is full of rights. Our particular culture is one where we take pride in our rights. As a matter of fact, the rights of individuals are constitutional! As we see the demanding of individual rights increase, we see much of the moral fiber of our society decrease. Our Lord Jesus Christ laid down his rights and all His glory, to the heavens, to become a man and to serve, not to be served. (Phil 2:5-11 and Mark 10:45)

We ask you to consider laying down your rights on this mission trip. Not to lay them down for better or for worse, but to entrust them to the Lord or transfer the responsibility of them to a place of safe keeping. These rights may seem reasonable but on a short-term mission trip they could cause dissension. **Would you take time to search your heart and consider your willingness to surrender your rights to the Lord?**

**Romans 12:1**

I GIVE UP MY RIGHT TO:

A comfortable bed

Having three meals a day

Having familiar food

Dressing fashionably

Seeing results

Control of myself

Control of others

Control of circumstances

Having pleasant circumstances

Making decisions

Taking up offense

Being successful

Being understood

Being heard

Being right

I ENTRUST TO GOD:

My strength and endurance

My health and strength

My likes and dislikes of food

My security in Him

His purposes and fruit in His timing

My need for His Spirit control

His workmanship in others

My circumstances to His purposes in making me Christ-like

The privilege of suffering for His sake

His sovereign hand on my life

My deepest needs

My security in His love

My reputation

My need for recognition

My need for His righteousness

I give God permission to do anything He wishes to me, with me, in me, or through me that would glorify Him.

\_\_\_\_\_ (signed)

\_\_\_\_\_ (date)