The Gospel Saves!

*(To The Jews First & Also The Greeks!)*

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday October 10th, 2021

Text: Acts 15:7-20

### Intro

1. Romans 1:16-17: The apostle Paul said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.’” (Paul quotes from Habakkuk 2:4)
   1. The quotation here from Hab. 2:4 indicates that the gospel being preached to Jew & Gentile alike is from God, and that it was prophesied to be so.
   2. But it wasn’t always thought so!
2. How do we know that the gospel is for all?
3. Even with established teaching and apostolic examples Jewish believers contended that the gospel mixed with parts of the Old Law were to be taught to Gentile saints!
4. Acts 15:1-6:
   1. Jewish believers went to Antioch where Paul & Barnabas were and taught that Gentile converts needed to be circumcised to be saved! (Acts 15:1)
   2. After much debate with these brethren by Paul & Barnabas, the church at Antioch sent these two men to Jerusalem to see what they should do (Acts 15:2).
   3. “When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them” (Acts 15:4).
   4. The Jewish believers in Jerusalem said that Gentile converts needed to be circumcised and to observe the Law of Moses! (Acts 15:5)
   5. The apostles and the elders of the church of Jerusalem came together to look into this matter (Acts 15:6).
5. A doctrinal disagreement arose. No divine help from God was sought or delivered, but men came together to “look into this matter” (Acts 15:6).
6. When disagreements arise today, how do we establish authority for what we believe and practice?

#### Establishing Authority

* 1. Jesus established His authority over Heaven and earth – Matthew 28:28-20
  2. He is Head over the church; therefore, the church is to be in subjection to Him!
     1. Eph. 1:18-23; 5:23-24: To be in subjection is to submit to the will of another.
     2. As Christ is the Head and the church is His body, the church must act as the Head directs!
  3. The authority of Christ is expressed in the Scriptures:
     1. The source of all truth (Jn. 16:13)
     2. Saints to speak the same thing (I Cor. 1:10)
     3. Saints to teach the words of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 2:12-13)
     4. Boundaries in this Law of Liberty (James 1:25):
        1. Not to exceed what is written (I Cor. 4:6)
        2. No other message than the gospel (Gal. 1:8-9)
        3. Must abide (continue) in the doctrine (teaching) of Christ or one doesn’t have God! (II John 9)
     5. Saints are to contend for the faith that was once delivered (Jude 3)
  4. How it is expressed:
     1. Two kinds:
        1. General – “Go & Teach” in Matthew 28:18-20 (Many modes of transportation to “Go” & many styles to “Teach” from)
        2. Specific – “Singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord” in Ephesians 5:19 (The melody comes from the heart, not an instrument, so we sing a cappella so as to not add to the word of God)
     2. In three ways:

1. Direct statement (Command)
2. Approved Example (Apostolic Example)
3. Necessary Implication (Necessary Inference)
   1. Those three ways can also be established or seen in a pattern or principle set forth by the writings of the Holy Spirit (Seen in the pattern of the first day of the week collection as Paul directed the churches at Galatia and also Corinth to do in I Corinthians 16:1).
   2. Which one of those ways was the authority to simply teach just the gospel to the Gentiles established?

#### The Gospel Saves!

* 1. Acts 15:7-11
     1. God gave the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles & cleansed their hearts through faith (15:8).
     2. Same as the Jews, “just as He also did to us” (15:8), “He made no distinction between us and them” (15:9)
     3. Jews are “saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus” (15:11)
     4. Gentiles are saved the same way, “in the same way as they also are” (15:11)
     5. **Necessary Implication:** God accepts the Gentiles; Jews must too!
        1. Peter defended this concept before in Jerusalem after the conversion of Cornelius, saying to the Jewish believers there, “Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?” (Acts 11:17)
        2. The Jewish believers at that time rejoiced that God granted the Gentiles repentance that leads to life! (Acts 11:18)
     6. Teaching Gentiles the Law of Moses: ***No Necessary Implication*** – Silent! (Acts 15:24: “To whom we gave no instruction”)
     7. **In Action Today:** Baptism is Immersion
        1. John 3:23: John was where there “was much water” to baptize the people coming to him.
        2. Acts 8:38-39: Philip and the eunuch “both went down into the water” and Philip baptized the eunuch, and then “they came up out of the water.”
        3. **Immersion is *Necessarily Implied*** with the phrases, “much water,” “both went down into the water,” and “both came up out of the water.”
  2. Acts 15:3, 7, 12
     1. The apostles, Peter and Paul (with Barnabas), preached to the Gentiles.
     2. They recounted to others and to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem all the things God did through them among the Gentiles.
     3. **Approved Example:** Preaching the gospel to the Gentiles *(Apostolic Example!)*
        1. Remember the purpose of miracles: To confirm the word of God!
        2. Mark 16:20: “And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.”
        3. Hebrews 2:1-4: “For if the word spoken…” (2:2) “After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard” (2:3), “God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will” (2:4).
     4. Teaching Gentiles the Law of Moses: ***No Approved Example*** – Silent! (Acts 15:24: “To whom we gave no instruction”)
     5. **In Action Today:** Baptism is for the forgiveness of sin and how one calls on the name of the Lord
        1. Acts 2:38: The apostle Peter taught the Jews on Pentecost to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins!
        2. Acts 22:16: The apostle Paul (then Saul) was told to not delay but to “Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”
        3. **Baptism for the forgiveness of sins is seen by *Apostolic Example*** by apostles teaching it and obeying it!
  3. Acts 15:13-20
     1. James reminded them that God directed Peter to take the gospel to the Gentiles.
     2. Then he says this isn’t all that strange because the prophets of old also agree, meaning that God foretold these events.
     3. He then quotes from Amos 9:11-12, specifically. However, other prophets may also be paraphrased here, such as: Jeremiah 12:15; Isaiah 45:21
     4. With what God had done among the Gentiles through Peter & Paul, the prophets agree, “SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,' SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG AGO” (Acts 15:17-18).
     5. **Direct Statement:** God made a direct statement that the Gentiles would be called by His name (Acts 15:17-18)
        1. James declares the matter settled (15:19)
        2. Peter sent by God to Cornelius (Acts 10:33-34, 43; 11:11-12)
     6. Teaching Gentiles the Law of Moses: ***No Direct Statement*** – Silent! (Acts 15:24: “To whom we gave no instruction”)
     7. **In Action Today:** Baptism is commanded and so is essential to salvation!
        1. Mark 16:15-16: Jesus commanded all people to believe and be baptized to be saved!
        2. Acts 2:38: Peter taught the Jews on the day of Pentecost to do what Jesus commanded: to repent and be baptized!
        3. Acts 10:48: To the house of Cornelius, a Gentile, Peter “ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.”
        4. **Baptism is a *Command*** for all people as seen by Peter teaching it to the Jews and ordering the Gentiles!
  4. The apostles and elders in Jerusalem solved the doctrinal problem of whether the Gentile converts must be circumcised and obey the Law of Moses in addition to obeying the gospel by appealing to Necessary Implication, Approved Example, and Direct Statement!
  5. They then saw to it a pattern or principle was taught by writing a letter to Gentile converts telling them not to listen to Judaizers to whom were given “no instruction” and that the letter was approved by the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:22-33).
  6. The gospel is for all: To the Jew first and also the Greek! (Romans 1:16-17)

## Conclusion

1. When a question of authority or doctrinal matter arises, let us consult the absolute authority source – God’s word!
   1. No need for wisdom of man or man-made creeds or doctrines, etc…
   2. We can follow the pattern that the council at Jerusalem followed!
2. The authority has been established: Let us teach the gospel to all people!
3. If you are not a Christian, you need to be. Repent and be baptized into His name!
4. If a Christian in error, don’t wait till it’s eternally too late. Repent and be renewed!
5. Whatever your requests, let them be known ***NOW*** while we stand & sing!