



Chapter 15: Theological Triage: Guarding the Gospel, Preserving Unity

The Crisis in Antioch

"Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

What Was at Stake?

The false teachers were adding human works to the finished work of Christ.

Their formula:

Faith + Circumcision = Salvation

The apostles proclaimed:

Faith in Christ Alone = Salvation

Modern versions of this error include:

- Faith plus baptism
- Faith plus church membership
- Faith plus moral reform

- Faith plus religious performance

Peter's Defense of Grace

God already demonstrated His acceptance of Gentiles.

1. God Chose

Salvation began with God's initiative.

2. God Gave the Spirit

The Spirit came upon Gentiles apart from circumcision.

3. God Cleansed Their Hearts by Faith

Faith is the instrument, not works.

4. God Makes No Distinction

Jews and Gentiles are saved the same way.

But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.

Paul and Barnabas Testify

Their Evidence

They report God's works among the Gentiles.

Important Principle

Doctrine is confirmed by God's work but never determined by experience alone.

Experience must always be interpreted by Scripture.

Healthy churches celebrate testimonies, but Scripture remains the final authority.

James Appeals to Scripture

Why James Matters

James serves as the concluding voice of the council.

He does not merely appeal to experience.

He appeals to Scripture.

Amos 9:11-12

James demonstrates that Gentile inclusion was God's plan all along.

Scripture settles theological disputes.

Unity Without Compromise

The requested abstentions were not conditions for salvation.

They were practical expressions of love and fellowship.

The Jerusalem Letter

"It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us..."

- Clarity
- Encouragement
- Unity
- Joy

God often protects His people through qualified leadership working together under Scripture.

Wait, What? Paul and Barnabas fighting

"And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other."

What Makes This Different from the Earlier Conflict?

How is a sinner saved?

Who should join the missionary team?

Mature Christians must learn to distinguish between:

- Defending the gospel
- Disagreeing over ministry strategy

Key Takeaways

1. The gospel is worth defending at all costs.
2. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.
3. Scripture is the final authority in theological disputes.
4. The church must pursue both truth and unity.
5. Not every doctrine carries the same level of importance.
6. Mature believers know when to contend and when to show charity.