



When People Complicate Christianity

“Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”² This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.”
- Acts 15:1-2 (NIV 1984)

A religion of works vs. a religion of grace

“Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses.”⁶ The apostles and elders met to consider this question. “
- Acts 15:5-6 (NIV 1984)

Sometimes good people make Christianity unbearable.

Acts 15:7-11 - Peter's address

Not the Law and Christ, but Christ only!

Acts 15:13-21 - James' address

“It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.²⁰ Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.²¹ For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”
- Acts 15:19-21 (NIV 1984)

v20 - These would prohibit fellowship between Jews and Gentiles.

Acts 15:23-29 – The Council's Letter to Gentile Believers

“The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message.”
- Acts 15:31 (NIV 1984)

Memorize this verse:

*“For it is by **grace** you have been saved, **through faith**—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. “*
- Ephesians 2:8 (NIV 1984)

Small Group Questions

1. Read and compare Acts 15 with Galatians 2. What happens to Peter? Why did this happen?
2. Compare Paul's words in Galatians 2:15-21 with Peter's words in Acts 15:7-11. How are they similar?
3. Read Acts 15:1 & 5. What would you say are some of the expectations that are put on people for salvation or acceptance into the church?
4. Explain a time when you didn't accept a person because of their behavior or lifestyle. What happened?
5. Read Ephesians 2:8. How are you still trying to earn God's favor?