**Acts 15**

**Introduction**

This chapter provides us a good example of how to deal with problems of doctrine and personal conflict. How do you debate in matters of salvation are on the line? How do we deal with issues of personal debate?

**The Problem: Acts 15:1-5**

* Debate in Antioch: 15:1-2
* Debate in Jerusalem: 15:5
* Much Debate: 15:7

This is a huge problem and there has been a ton of debate on this issue. People are claiming that this is an issue of salvation! How do you resolve an issue that has eternal consequences? How is the debate going to be settled? Will matters of opinion win out?

**1. Peter (15:7-11)**

Again, there is a lot of debate that goes unrecorded, but Peter stands up to speak. How is he going to approach the problem? ***He explains how God has acted***.

a) God wanted Gentiles to receive gospel and sent me to them (15:7)

b) God treated Jews and Gentiles same

* God knows the heart, gave them Holy Spirit just like us (15:8)
* God showed no distinction; He cleansed their heart by faith (15:9)
* Salvation is gift of God’s grace (15:11)

Peter’s Conclusion: I am not going to test the Lord when He has spoken clearly on an issue (15:10)!

**2. Paul and Barnabas (15:12)**

Paul and Barnabas have been in the thick of this debate from the very beginning (15:1-2). ***There emphasis falls on what has God done***. Since we already know much about their travels from Acts 13-14, Luke does not feel the need to repeat details that we already know.

***God is behind Gentile mission***

* 14:26-27
* 15:4
* 15:12

***What signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles***

* 2:22: Jesus affirmed by signs and wonders
* 6:8: Stephen affirmed by signs and wonders
* 7:36: Moses was from God as seen by signs and wonders

***God’s Actions show that He was behind the Gentile mission!***

**3. James (15:13-21)**

After Paul and Barnabas have finished talking James starts to talk. He shows that he has been listening by (a) waiting for Paul and Barnabas to finish and (b) citing what Cephas (Peter) had said.

***James’ focus is what God has revealed through His word!***

* Prophets: Notice the PLURAL
* Amos 9:11-12
* Isaiah 45:21

***Notice the focus of those gathered to solve this problem***

* What God has done
* How God has acted
* What God said (i.e. revealed through prophets)
* Guided by the Holy Spirit (15:28)

**Lessons**

1) God is consistent (Heb 13:8)!

2) God does not changing mind all of sudden

3) They are not making guesses at what God wants but going by what God has said

4) Problems occur when we act based on what we think instead of what God said (15:24)!