

With Sister Paulette Morrison
on April 3, 2022

Discovering the Power of the Word

A Reading and Listening Session
Based on Acts 15



GREATER DELIVERANCE
CHURCH OF GOD MINISTRIES

Introduction

In this session, we explore the transformative power of God's Word through the lens of Acts 15. We'll delve into key verses and themes, discovering how the early church grappled with theological differences and ultimately found unity through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures. Contributions from Deaconess Sonia Ellis, Evangelist Dobney, and First Lady Morrison enriched our understanding of this pivotal moment in Christian history.

The Law of Moses

Acts 15:1 sets the stage: 'And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.' This sparked a major controversy. Was adherence to the Law of Moses necessary for salvation, even for Gentile believers? This question threatened to divide the burgeoning Christian community. Deaconess Sonia Ellis highlighted the importance of understanding the historical context of this debate, noting that many Jewish Christians struggled to reconcile their newfound faith with their lifelong adherence to the Law.

Great Joy

Acts 15:3 tells us that as Paul and Barnabas traveled, they 'declared the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.' The news of Gentiles embracing Christianity without first becoming Jewish was met with excitement by many. This highlights the inclusive nature of the Gospel and God's desire for all people to be saved, regardless of their background. Evangelist Dobney elaborated on the significance of this 'great joy,' emphasizing how it foreshadowed the universal reach of the Christian message.

Consider this Matter

The apostles and elders gathered to address the issue. Peter, recalling his experience with Cornelius, declared in Acts 15:7-9: 'Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice

among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.' Peter's testimony was crucial in shaping the discussion. He reminded them that God Himself had validated the faith of the Gentiles.

In Acts 15:11-12, Peter concludes that 'through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.' Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles.

Defend the Truth

The debate surrounding the Law of Moses was not merely a matter of opinion; it was a matter of *truth*. The core of the gospel message was at stake: salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Any addition to this foundation, such as adherence to the Law, would undermine the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. First Lady Morrison powerfully articulated the need to *defend the truth* of the Gospel against any and all distortions.

Prophecy

James, in Acts 15:15-16, adds weight to Peter's argument by quoting the prophet Amos: 'As it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up.' James connected the inclusion of the Gentiles to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, showing that God's plan had always been to include all nations in His covenant.

Abstain

James proposes a practical solution in Acts 15:19-20: 'Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.' This was a balanced approach that sought to maintain unity while addressing legitimate concerns. The Gentile believers were asked to abstain from practices that would be particularly offensive to Jewish Christians, fostering fellowship and understanding.

Serve in Unity

Acts 15:23-26 describes the letter sent to the Gentile churches, conveying the decision of the apostles and elders. It emphasizes the importance of unity and fellowship. The chosen messengers, Judas and Silas, were sent to confirm the message and encourage the believers. This demonstrated a commitment to *serve in unity* for the sake of the Gospel.

Separation

Even with the agreement reached at the Jerusalem Council, disagreements could still arise. Acts 15:36-38 recounts the separation of Paul and Barnabas over John Mark's suitability for ministry. While this separation was unfortunate, it also highlights the importance of individuals following their conscience and pursuing their calling. It's a reminder that even within the Body of Christ, differences of opinion and approach can exist.

My Conclusion

Acts 15 offers valuable lessons for the church today. It underscores the importance of grounding our beliefs in Scripture, engaging in respectful dialogue, and seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. While disagreements may arise, we must strive to maintain unity in the essentials of the faith and to love one another as Christ has loved us. By reading and reflecting on the Word of God, we can discover its power to transform our lives and to unite us in service to Him.