



The Gentiles Are Saved by Faith

Acts 15:1–35



LESSON GOAL

Students will understand that salvation is received through faith and not earned by works.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Tell why the believers in Antioch were troubled.
- Describe the reason for the Jerusalem council.
- Explain how the apostles showed that Gentiles are saved through faith alone.
- Tell why James wanted Gentile believers to abstain from certain practices.

KEY VERSE

“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.”
—*Acts 15:11*

APPLICATION

- Rejoice that God provides salvation by grace through faith alone.
- Defend the Gospel with gentleness and patience.
- Do not offend the consciences of others by your use of freedom.

NEXT WEEK

The Philippian Jailer Is Saved
Acts 16:16–40

Symbol Key



Craft



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet



2 Grade Level

Teacher Planning Sheet

PREPARE

Objectives/Truths to cover this week

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Personal Application

As a result of my study in this passage, God wants me to...

- _____
- _____
- _____

Three ways students need to apply this passage are...

- _____
- _____
- _____

Materials Needed:

POINT

Choose from various ideas to point students to the coming Bible lesson.

- _____
- _____

PROCLAIM

Choose from various ideas to proclaim the Bible lesson.

Presentation Ideas

- _____
- _____

Praise/Music Ideas

- _____
- _____
- _____

PRACTICE

Choose ideas to help review and apply today's lesson.

- _____
- _____

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... you shall teach them to your children.” —Deuteronomy 11:18–19

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here that will aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Introduction

When God sent Peter to proclaim Christ to Cornelius (Acts 10), the church in Jerusalem rejoiced that God had “also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life” (11:18). God did not require Gentiles like Cornelius to proselytize and follow the Law before forgiving their sins. He forgave them because they had faith in His Son. After an initial period of rejoicing, the church began to struggle with the fact that Gentile believers were part of the church. Some Jewish believers had difficulty fellowshiping with Gentiles who did not obey the Law. Although the threat to fellowship between Jews and Gentiles was serious, a more serious danger was brewing, one that would affect how both Jews and Gentiles viewed their salvation. Some Jews began to teach that Gentiles could not be saved without being circumcised. The church had to respond to whether Gentiles were saved by grace through faith alone or whether they needed to follow the Law in order to be saved.

Conflict in Antioch (Acts 15:1–5)

Throughout the Roman Empire, Gentiles were hearing the Gospel and being saved. The first major center of Gentile conversion was Antioch, the third largest city in the Roman Empire. Some of the Jews who had fled Jerusalem following the murder of Stephen made their way to Antioch where they preached to the Greeks (Acts 11:19–20). Luke writes that “the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:21). Upon hearing of the Gentile conversions in Antioch, the elders of Jerusalem sent Barnabas to encourage the church (11:22–24). Barnabas found Saul and brought him to Antioch where they both taught for a year (11:25–26). The church in Antioch eventually sent out Saul (Paul) and Barnabas to proclaim the Gospel in other cities throughout Asia Minor. Although Paul and Barnabas always began their ministry in a new city by going to Jews first, more and more Gentiles heard the Gospel and believed (Acts 13–14). When they returned to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas testified how God “had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14:28).

The church in Antioch faced a serious test when Jews came teaching that salvation was not by faith alone. Luke records that “certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). These “false brethren” (Galatians 2:4) were not sent from the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:24). They were proliferating another gospel, one in which people were justified by works rather than faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16). Recognizing the heresy in what these men were teaching, “Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them” (Acts 15:2). Still, the brethren of Antioch were thrown into chaos by the disturbing and destructive teaching (Acts 15:24). The church wisely decided to send Paul,

Barnabas and others (including the uncircumcised Gentile Titus) to Jerusalem to discuss the problem with the “apostles and elders” (Acts 15:2; Galatians 2:1–2).

During their trip, Paul and Barnabas repeatedly glorified God for how He had saved the Gentiles. On their way down to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas told the brethren in Phoenicia and Samaria how the Gentiles had been converted (Acts 15:3). Upon reaching Jerusalem, the entourage reported to the church, the apostles and the elders everything that God had done (15:4). The church must have eagerly listened as Paul and Barnabas told what had happened during their missionary journey in Asia Minor (Acts 13–14).

Not all in the church were happy with the situation with the Gentile believers. When believing Pharisees heard about the Gentile believers, they said, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). They thought the Law was essential for all believers, not just the Jews. With both true and false brethren advocating that Gentiles be circumcised, the church needed to confirm its position on Gentile believers and the Law.

Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:6–29)

When the apostles and elders met to discuss the matter, there was “much dispute” amongst the church as to whether Gentiles needed to be circumcised and obey the Law (Acts 15:6). Peter, Barnabas, Paul, and James the elder all argued that since God had accepted the Gentiles through faith alone the church should not require them to obey the Mosaic Law.

Peter’s argument began with his previous experience witnessing to Cornelius. Peter argued that Cornelius and the other Gentiles were saved when they heard the Gospel and believed (Acts 15:7). They were not saved by doing anything but only through believing. God clearly accepted the Gentiles because he gave them the Holy Spirit and purified “their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9). Since God had made it so clear that the Gentiles had been saved apart from the Law, those who argued that the Gentile believers needed to obey the Law were testing God’s wisdom in Gentile salvation (Acts 15:10). Peter also argued that making the Gentile disciples observe the Law would be putting them under the same “yoke...which neither our fathers nor we are able to bear” (Acts 15:10). If no Jew had ever been able to fulfill the Law and gain salvation, why place the Gentiles already acceptable to God under the Law? Peter finished with a grand declaration: “We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they” (15:11). Both Jews and Gentiles were saved in the same way—by grace! Neither Jew nor Gentile could be saved by works.

When Barnabas and Paul began their testimony, they had a quiet audience who had apparently been impressed by Peter’s testimony (15:12). On the surface, Barnabas and Paul’s argument was less theological than Peter’s. They simply told “how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles” (15:12). But the reasoning behind their testimony was profound. Their testimony raised the implied question: “Why would God be validating Barnabas and Paul through miracles, if they were not really preaching the Gospel?” Unlike those who advocated salvation by works (who could claim no miraculous signs), God did miracles through Barnabas and Paul who preached salvation through faith alone.

The elder James argued that Peter’s testimony was corroborated by Old Testament prophecy. He first reminded the people of Peter’s testimony of how God “visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name” (15:14). Although God’s gracious salvation of the Gentiles was unexpected, it was not without prophetic precedent. James quoted Amos’ prophecy of the millennial kingdom (Amos

9:11–12) in which God proclaimed that Gentiles would be called by His name (Acts 15:15–17). Since in the future God would save Gentiles without them becoming Jewish proselytes, it should not have been surprising that God would save Gentiles now. At some time, whether now or in God’s future earthly kingdom, the Jews had to get use to God’s salvation of Gentiles apart from circumcision and obedience to the Law.

Peter, Barnabas, Paul and James had successfully argued that God was saving the Gentiles through faith alone, apart from their observance of the Law. Although the issue of salvation through faith alone was settled, the church still faced a remaining problem: How could Jews and Gentiles fellowship together when Gentiles did so many things which offended the Jewish conscience? To preserve fellowship between Jews and Gentiles, James recommended that Gentiles refrain from four things: “from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood” (Acts 15:20). Each of these practices—eating food sacrificed to idols, eating meat which had been strangled, eating meat which had not been drained of its blood, and participating in various forms of sexual immorality—were particularly offensive to Jews. For saved Gentiles, sexual immorality was the only one of these practices which was sinful. Because Jews had for so long heard Moses (the Law) preached in each city and continued to hear Moses “read in the synagogue every Sabbath,” they would have a difficult time not being offended by Gentiles who followed these practices. For the sake of unity among the brethren, the church in Jerusalem asked the Gentiles to limit their freedom in order to not offend their Jewish brothers.

The Jerusalem church informed the “brethren of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia” of their decisions by sending a letter back with Paul and Barnabas. Paul and Barnabas were accompanied by Judas and Silas, two “leading men among the brethren” in Jerusalem (Acts 15:22–23). The letter affirmed that those men who had come to Antioch demanding that the Gentile believers be circumcised and follow the Law were not sent by the Jerusalem apostles and elders (15:24). The four men were sent to confirm in person what the council had decided (15:25–27). Unlike the men who had “troubled” the Gentile believers with their words (15:24), the church was not going to place any extra requirements upon the Gentiles who had already been saved through faith alone. For the sake of fellowship between Jews and Gentiles, the church, in agreement with the Holy Spirit, laid no requirement upon the Gentiles except to refrain from the four offensive practices (15:28–29).

Calm in Antioch (Acts 15:30–35)

When the believers gathered in Antioch, they heard the letter and “rejoiced over its encouragement” (Acts 15:30–31). The believers were relieved that the church in Jerusalem confirmed the Gospel by which they had come to know Christ. Just as had been preached to them, salvation was through faith alone and not dependent upon human works like circumcision. The church was also encouraged by Judas and Silas who “exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words” (15:32). The two men had come to Antioch with greetings from Jerusalem. When they returned to Jerusalem, they went with “greetings from the brethren to the apostles” (15:33). Jews and Gentiles, Antioch and Jerusalem were united in fellowship. After Judas and Silas left, the Gospel of salvation through faith alone continued to spread, as both Paul and Barnabas remained, “teaching and preaching the word of the Lord” (15:35).

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth."
—Psalm 78:1*

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

What happened to Peter?

He was arrested and put in prison.

What was the church doing for Peter as he was in prison?

They were praying for him constantly.

What happened as Peter slept?

An angel stood by Peter and a light shone in the prison. The angel and told him to get up and Peter's chains fell off. Then they left the prison.

Where did Peter go after leaving prison?

Peter went Mary's house, who was the mother of John.

What happened when Peter knocked on the gate?

Rhoda answered the door but did not let Peter in because she recognized his voice and was very excited.

What did Rhoda do?

She told everyone inside praying that Peter was at the gate but they did not believe her.

What happened when they opened the door?

They were astonished and they let Peter in.

What happened to Herod?

Herod did not give God the glory and he died.



Difficult Concepts

The Law of Moses: The Law of Moses refers to all the commands God gave the Israelites through Moses. It includes moral laws, like do not kill and do not steal. It also includes special laws about the Jewish religion called ceremonial laws, such as not eating pigs and how to offer sacrifices. The Law affected all of life every day. Because of its many demands, no person could ever obey it perfectly. Explain that the Law was not just like the laws in America, such as not speeding and having to pay taxes. The Law of Moses told the Israelites what they could and could not wear, what they could and could not eat, and even who they could not marry. Have the students imagine a lengthy list of rules from their parents that would be impossible to obey, such as never getting dirty, only wearing red shirts, and eating only cereal.

Counsel: A counsel is a big meeting where leaders discuss what to do. The counsel at Jerusalem involved some of the apostles and other church leaders who were

discussing what to do about the new Gentile Christians. Illustrate the counsel with a parent-teacher meeting. Parents meet with teachers to discuss how the students are behaving in class or how they are doing in their school-work.

Circumcision: Circumcision was a physical mark God commanded the Jews to have. It was a reminder that God had promised to bless the Jewish people with their own nation, Land, and a unique relationship with Himself. The Jews were expected to obey all of God's laws, and circumcision set them apart as belonging to God. Illustrate circumcision with a wedding ring. Though it's not a physical mark, a wedding ring indicates a promise two people have made to each other. The ring is a reminder of their unique relationship and the promises they expect each other to keep.

Abstain: "Abstain" means to avoid doing something. If the student does not like broccoli, he likes to avoid eating it. He abstains from broccoli. If he does not like cleaning his room, then he abstains until told he must clean it.

Conscience: The conscience is a way of thinking that everybody has when they are born. It tells people not to do certain things and the difference between right and wrong. While some people have a stronger conscience than others, the conscience is not as effective or clear as God's Word. People can ignore their conscience or stop using it. Have the students imagine their dad writing a note with a chore on it for Saturday morning. The student might listen to the note and do the chore. Or they might hide the note under their bed, in which case they aren't going to obey what the note says to do.

Faith Alone: Faith alone is the only way to be saved. Many people try to work for their salvation. They go to church a lot, or pray, or give poor people money, or get baptized, or try to keep a list of rules. They try to do all these things so they can get to Heaven. While these actions are good, no one can work enough to get to Heaven. When people try to believe and to work for their salvation, they ruin faith. Saving faith is complete trust in what Christ did, without any attempted works. Pass out rubber bands to the class. Hold up a bull's eye you know they won't be able to hit and tell them to shoot their rubber bands at the target. They must hit the target right in the middle. After they have all fallen short, tell them no matter how hard they tried they could not get to Heaven. Pass the rubber bands back out. Ask them if they trust you to hit the target. Take their rubber bands from them, walk to the target, and put them on the bull's eye. Faith in you, without trying to shoot the rubber bands themselves, was the only way to hit the bull's eye.

Dissension and Debate: Dissension and debate mean fighting and arguing. Ask the students if they have ever disagreed or argued with their brothers or sisters.



Works vs. Faith Alone

In Acts 15, the early church responded to the false teaching that someone could not be saved unless they were circumcised and kept the Old Testament Law (Acts 15:1,24). Help the children understand that many people still believe they are saved by doing actions and not through faith alone. Bring in pictures of different religious places (a Catholic church, an Islamic mosque, a Jewish synagogue, and a Buddhist temple) and tell how people who go to each of these places think they can be "saved." Then show a picture of your church and tell the students that there are lost people in their own church who think they are saved by going to church, giving money, being good, or praying and reading. Show the students a picture of themselves. Share with the students your concern that some of the students think they can go to heaven by doing actions and not through faith alone.



Customs

Discuss ways certain cultures can be offended. For instance, explain the Japanese custom of removing shoes. It would be rude in their culture to ignore this practice. Other examples could include courtesies like bowing or exchanging kisses. Some of the Christian Jews had a difficult time accepting Gentiles in the church because the Gentiles had customs which were offensive to the Jews. For the Jews it was very offensive to eat with someone who ate meat which had been sacrificed to an idol or which had not been drained of its blood.



Can't Do It

Help the children learn the futility of trying to get to heaven by works and not by faith alone. Divide the children into two groups. Each group of children is given the same number of blocks with which they are going to build a structure. Above where each team is building is a piece of paper on which is written "Heaven." Tell the children that the first team that builds a structure that reaches heaven wins. Unknown to the children is that neither team has enough blocks to reach heaven. To play the game, have the children run a relay race in which each child takes one block, runs to where that team is building, and places their block on top (without knocking the structure over). When the child returns to the line, the next child in line can go. Depending upon the age of the children, the game will end when all the blocks are used or when a certain amount of time has passed. When the game ends, the teacher can compare the size of the two building and the children can clap for the team that has the higher building. The teacher can then explain that the blocks are a picture of the good things that people do. No matter how many good things they do, people can't work their way "up" to heaven. The teacher should explain that the only way to enter heaven is through repentant faith.



Tradition

Bring in a picture of a Christmas tree and another of a cucumber. Ask the students if they would rather set up the cucumber in their living room for Christmas and decorate it with ornaments. Lead them into a discussion of traditions and how we like to keep things the way they are. It seems silly to us to imagine decorating a cucumber for Christmas and no one would want to change.



Snacks

Use snack time to demonstrate differences in Jewish and Gentile culture. Separate the students into two groups. Give one group regular Oreos and the other chocolate cream Oreos. Or, have one group eat their Oreos as normal, and the others eat the cream first. Tell them about unique Jewish food practices that made them distinct from the Gentiles such as not eating pig meat.



Gospel

Maximize this lesson to discuss the Gospel. Have the students tell you the crucial aspects of the Gospel, such as admitting sin, repenting from sin, believing Jesus died for sin and was raised, and submitting to the Lordship of Christ. Write the answers on the board. Be sure to add any elements the students do not provide.



Review

Discuss the external evidences that the Jews had received Christ at Pentecost. Remind the students about the coming of the Holy Spirit and the sign of tongues. Ask if the Holy Spirit came on Cornelius and his household when they received Christ. Use Acts 15:8–9 to point out that Gentiles received the Holy Spirit just like

the Jews did. Because the Holy Spirit was the indication of true conversion, the Gentiles were just as truly converted as the Jews were.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.” —Psalm 78:4

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students’ understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use alongside the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done right from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Passage Outline

Conflict in Antioch (Acts 15:1–5)

Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:6–29)

Calm in Antioch (Acts 15:30–35)

Reading of the Text

Read Acts 15:1–35.

Introduction

There are things in life that are not to be tampered with or altered in any way. One such thing is the gospel. Maintaining the true gospel, with all that it entails, is essential for one to receive salvation. To try to offer another gospel, other than the one revealed in Scripture, would be a serious offense. In today’s lesson Paul and Barnabas encountered such offenders. They witnessed a group of Jews in Antioch who were trying to manipulate the Gentiles in following a false gospel. To see how Paul and Barnabas combated this false gospel, let us look at Acts 15:1–35.



Lead-off Questions (LOQs)

LOQ: At the beginning of today’s lesson, what were the Jews in Antioch teaching regarding the gospel?

Answer: Luke records that certain men came down from Judea teaching that one could not be saved unless he was circumcised. Circumcision was a part of the law that Jews had followed since the time of Moses. This teaching however was not the true gospel. Instead of being saved by faith through Jesus Christ, the men from Judea were teaching that salvation depended upon one’s obedience to the law.

LOQ: What was the dispute that Paul and Barnabas had with the men of Judea?

Answer: Paul and Barnabas knew that proclaiming a false gospel was a very serious offense. Because of its great importance, both Paul and Barnabas gave great effort in trying to reason with the false teachers of Judea. They greatly

desired for the teaching of these men to be corrected so that they would clearly know the true gospel and be saved. However, when no side agreed with the other the church in Antioch had Paul and Barnabas visit Jerusalem in order to discuss the problem with the apostles and elders. From this visit, Paul and Barnabas were to receive what the gospel truly is.

LOQ: What does Peter stand up and proclaim among the apostles and elders there in Jerusalem?

Answer: After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and proclaimed the true gospel. He had seen how Cornelius and other Gentiles were saved when they heard the Gospel and believed. They were not saved by doing anything but only through believing. Peter was very confident of the Gentiles' salvation because he had witnessed them receiving the Holy Spirit.

LOQ: What did Peter mean when he referred to the Jews trying to put a "yoke" around the Gentiles?

Answer: According to Peter, the Jews had been guilty of trying to make the Gentiles obey the law for salvation. Peter argued that making the Gentile disciples observe the Law would be putting them under the same "yoke" which neither their fathers nor they themselves were able to bear. Since no Jew had ever been able to fulfill the Law and gain salvation, it made little sense to try to put the Gentiles under the same requirement. Man could only be saved through faith in Christ, not by works (obedience to the Law).

LOQ: How did the testimony of Paul and Barnabas prove that man was saved through faith alone?

Answer: After Peter's amazing speech, Paul and Barnabas stood up and simply told "how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles." That God worked such miracles through Paul and Barnabas confirmed that they were indeed sharing the true gospel. Unlike those who taught salvation by works (who could claim no miraculous signs), God did miracles through Barnabas and Paul who preached salvation through faith alone.

LOQ: What does the apostle James decide to add to Peter's testimony?

Answer: After Peter's testimony, James remembered how God had foretold the salvation of the Gentiles through Old Testament prophecy. In the book of Amos, God had told how He was going to visit the Gentiles and take out of them a people for His name (Amos 9:11-12). This was exactly what Peter was telling those in Jerusalem. Since in the future God had announced that the Gentiles would one day be called by His name, it should not have been surprising that God would now save Gentiles. At some time, whether now or in God's future earthly kingdom, the Jews had to get use to God's salvation of Gentiles apart from circumcision and obedience to the Law.

LOQ: Why did James want the Gentiles believers to refrain from doing certain things?

Answer: To preserve fellowship between Jews and Gentiles, James recommended that Gentiles refrain from four things: "from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood" (Acts 15:20). Each of these practices—eating food sacrificed to idols, eating meat which had been strangled, eating meat which had not been drained of its blood, and partic-

icipating in various forms of sexual immorality—were particularly offensive to Jews. For the sake of unity among the brethren, the church in Jerusalem asked the Gentiles to limit their freedom in order to not offend their Jewish brothers.

LOQ: How did the believers in Antioch respond when they heard of Paul and Barnabas' visit to Jerusalem?

Answer: When the believers gathered in Antioch, they heard the letter and “rejoiced over its encouragement” (Acts 15:30-31). The believers were relieved that the church in Jerusalem confirmed the Gospel by which they had come to know Christ. Just as had been preached to them, salvation was through faith alone and not dependent upon human works like circumcision. They were encouraged, and the Gospel of salvation through faith alone continued to spread, as both Paul and Barnabas remained “teaching and preaching the word of the Lord” (15:35).

Summary

The Gospel had continued to spread and the church continued to grow. Gentiles were being saved and just as God had commanded the good news was going to the ends of the earth. The Jews began to say that the Gentiles must adhere to the Law to receive salvation. Upon hearing this news Peter, Barnabas, Paul and James defended the true gospel before the Jerusalem Counsel. They explained that why would the Gentiles have to obey the same Law that no one has ever been able to keep. They explained that both Jews and Gentiles are saved the same way – by grace alone through faith alone.

Application

That salvation is provided through faith and not by works is evidence to God's extreme graciousness. Everyone who has received the Gospel and now believes in Christ should rejoice in God's salvation. They have been saved not because of what they have done, but because of their faith in what Christ has done for them. This is the Gospel that is to be shared with all people.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards®

Use appropriate A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards® with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannel Graph

Use appropriate flannel graph pieces with the lesson.



Three Testimonies Skit

Have three teachers or helpers dress up in robes. One speaks as Peter, one as Barnabas, and one as James. Have Peter talk about his experience preaching to Cornelius and how Cornelius was saved. Have Barnabas describe the fruitful ministry of Paul. Last, have James paraphrase the Old Testament quote in 15:16–18 and announce that the Gentiles can be Christians too.



Newspaper Skit

Bring in a newspaper and pretend to be reading the headlines. Jump up in shock. “Look, it says right here on the front that Gentiles can be saved! Amazing!” Rush over to a helper to show them, and have them agree that the news is wonderful.



Illustrating the Unbearable Yolk

Bring a stack of large books. Label them the “Law.” Ask a volunteer to come hold one. Then, add another. Keep talking about the heaviness of the Law as you continue to add books, until the student is unable to hold them up anymore. Ask if any other students think they can do better, and then repeat the process with them. Show that obeying the Law is impossible. The Jews couldn’t do it, and neither can we.



Two Hearts

Draw two hearts on the dry erase board. Color one in with a regular dry erase marker, and the other with a sharpie. Hold up two erasers, one labeled “Faith” and the other “Works.” Use the faith eraser for the regular marker and the works for the sharpie. Show the class that works cannot erase the sin inside our hearts. The sharpie can be removed later with Windex or dry-erase board cleaner.

Alternative: if you have a chalkboard, place a small piece of chalk in the “Works” eraser. When you go to erase one of the hearts, it will simply color it in more.



Faith Alone

To demonstrate faith alone, bring in a candy bar. Ask the students if they would like to eat it. Talk about how it is good and just right all by itself. Unwrap it, then bring out a piece of squash or smelly cheese. Add it to the candy bar, then ask how many people want it. The same thing could be done with a cake and broccoli. Explain that the salvation that God offers is perfect and that we do not need to add anything to make it better. God doesn’t require the Law to be added to His perfect salvation. Clarify that the Law isn’t bad, but adding it simply isn’t necessary.



Building a Bike Skit

Bring in a fully constructed bicycle. Have two helpers begin arguing about how to build the bike. Have one present a detailed plan for putting on the tires, then the handlebars, then the seat. The other argues vehemently that the seat comes first, then the chain, then the decals, then the rest. While they continue to argue, a third actor walks in and points out that the bike is already built. Both helpers immediately stop talking and stare at the bike in stunned silence. Salvation has already been put together for us. We don’t need to figure how to do it, we just need to believe it. God already accomplished salvation, but people are still trying to figure out how they can save themselves. They need to trust in what has already been done.



Listing

Ask the students for various actions that must be done in order to be saved. Compile them on the board. If they know enough to avoid answers like “Go to church,” “Pray,” etc, have them tell you what some people try to do in order to be saved. Point out that people create their own law that they try to keep in order to merit salvation. The Jews already had the Law; most people make up their own.

Encouraging Letter

Prepare a short letter of encouragement for each student. Encourage them for their attendance in your class, or for their kindness, or for their diligence to learn memory verses, or their joyfulness. Include this week’s key verse at the end of the letter.

Praise and Worship

Shout to the Lord

My God Is so Big

I Will Call Upon the Lord

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.” —Psalm 78:7

Choose ideas from this section that review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



The Authority

Ask the students how we come to a biblical decision today. Pick one issue, such as cheating. Talk with them about looking in God’s Word for His commands, then looking for principles. Explain that the New Testament was written by the apostles, so we are actually looking to what the apostles say to instruct us. The counsel in Jerusalem was doing the same thing. They weren’t sure what to do, so they went to the apostles. They did not have Bibles yet, but they went to the people who wrote the Bible.



Relay Game

Have the students stand in a line. Play “over and under” with the class blocks. The goal is to pass the blocks one at a time down the line to a table on the end. The first student passes his block over his head, while the next one passes it under his legs and so on. Have a cross on the table for each team that is slowly buried by the blocks. When the race is over, point out that people try to add all kinds of works to get saved. But when they do, they cover up the cross, which is the only way to Heaven.



The Yoke of the Law

Materials: brown cardstock or construction paper, scissors, pencils or crayons

Directions: Give each student one piece of brown cardstock or construction paper. Cut in half length-wise, and glue and tape together to make a long strip. Cut out a small half-circle in the middle on the bottom (where yoke would rest on neck). Write “The Yoke of the Law” across the top, and write or glue on pre-printed verses, Acts 15:10 and 15:11, to each side.



“One Way”

Materials: copies of “One Way” craft pages, scissors, glue, crayons

Directions: Give each student a copy of the cross and the two squares labeled, “How Were the Gentiles Saved” and “How Were the Jews Saved.” Cut out the shape of the cross and fold the sides in on the dotted line. Glue one square to each side. Have students color and decorate the cross.



“Three Arguments”

Materials: copies of “Three Arguments” craft pages, scissors, crayons, glue

Directions: Give each child a copy of the craft pages. Have each student color the men and the pictures inside the word balloons. Next, he or she can cut out the balloons and glue it above the correct man. Read or have the students read the verses below each man to help them determine which word balloon goes above which man.



“Math Lesson”

Materials: copies of “Math Lesson” craft pages, scissors, glue, crayons

Directions: Give each students a copy of the craft page. He or she can color and cut out the numbers and the plus sign. Then, glue them in order on the other craft page.



“Gentiles are saved by faith”

Use this worksheet to reinforce the key truths of today’s lesson. It is located at the back of this lesson.

Coloring Pages

Give each student a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of the lesson. He or she can color the pages in class or take them home to color.



MEMORY VERSE

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” —*Ephesians 2:8*

One Way

"But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

—Acts 15:11

How can
we be
saved?

God
calls 
people

 God
gives
the Holy Spirit

God cleanses
the
heart 

One Way

How were
the Jews
saved?

How were
the Gentiles
saved?

How were
the Jews
saved?

How were
the Gentiles
saved?

How were
the Jews
saved?

How were
the Gentiles
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How were
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How were
the Jews
saved?

How were
the Gentiles
saved?

A Math Lesson from Peter in Acts 15:6–11

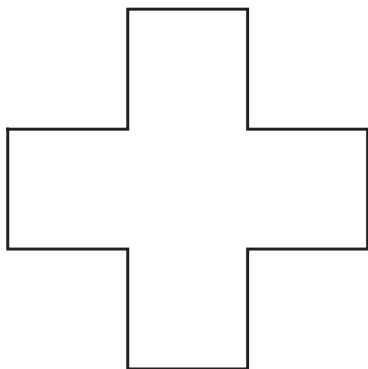
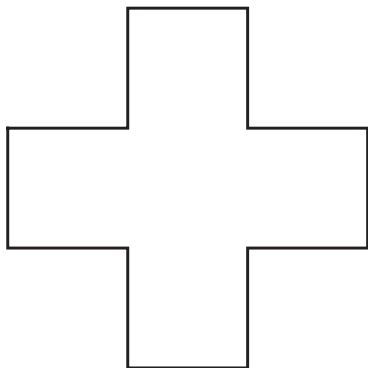
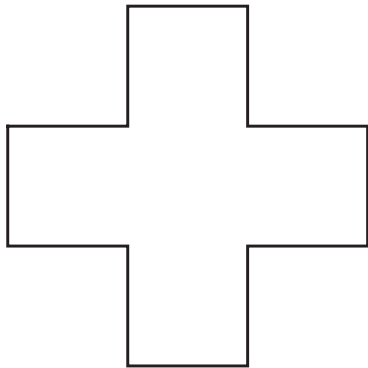
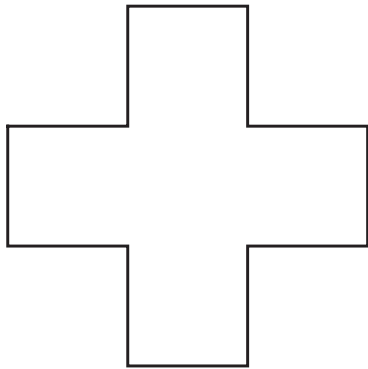
Don't

works

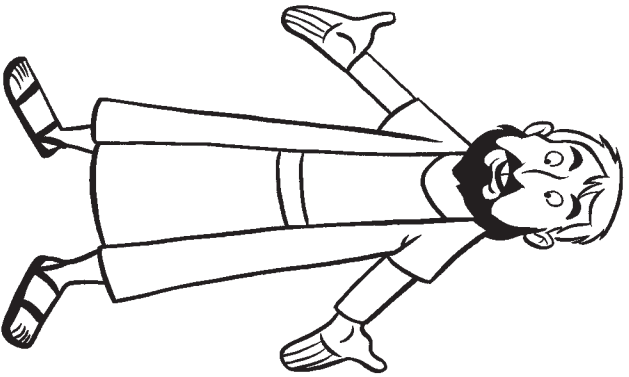
faith

salvation!

A Math Lesson from Peter in Acts 15:6-11

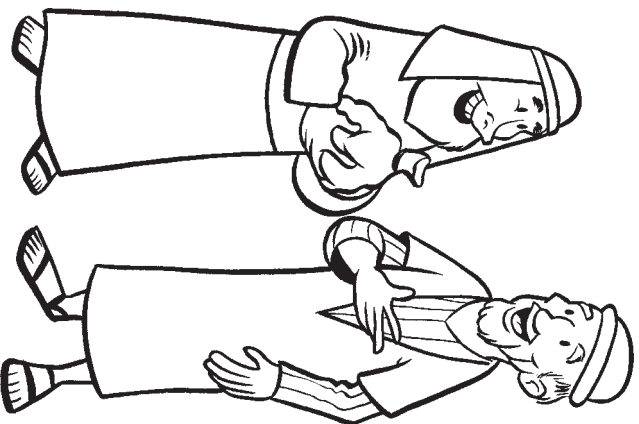


Three Arguments for Salvation by Grace



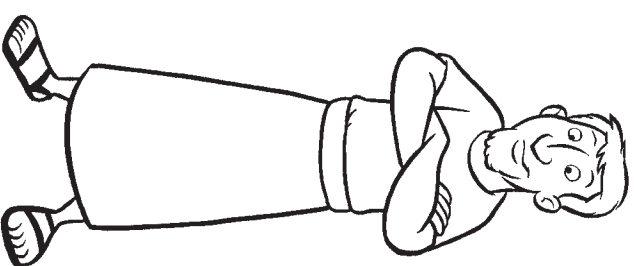
"And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: 'Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe: So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us.'"

—Acts 15:7-8



"Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles."

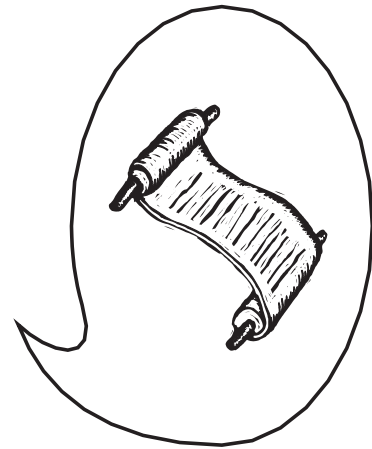
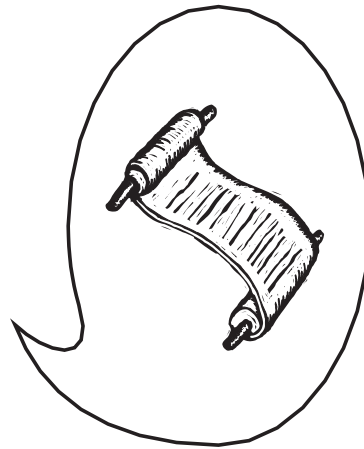
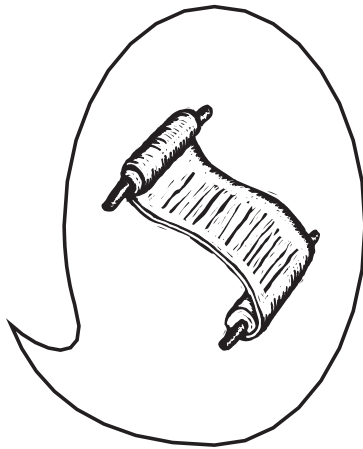
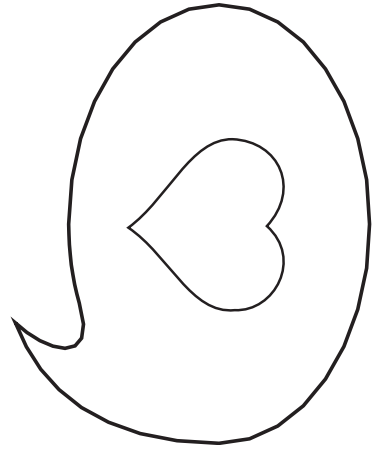
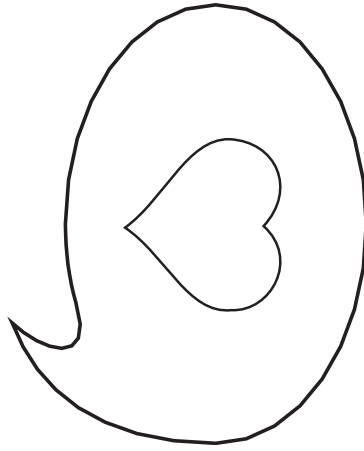
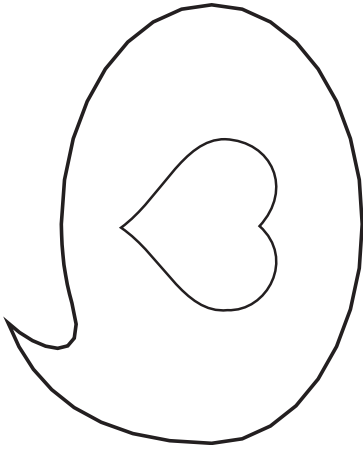
—Acts 15:12



"And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written."

—Acts 15:15

Three Arguments for Salvation by Grace



The Gentiles are saved by faith



Acts 15:1-35

Name _____

1. What were the false teachers saying the Gentiles must do to be saved?
 - a. not eat meat
 - b. only eat meat
 - c. be circumcised
 - d. build a temple

2. Where were Paul and Barnabas sent to settle the issue? _____

3. Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and James argued that salvation comes through _____
in Jesus Christ, not _____.

4. True or False: The Jerusalem council agreed with the disciples.

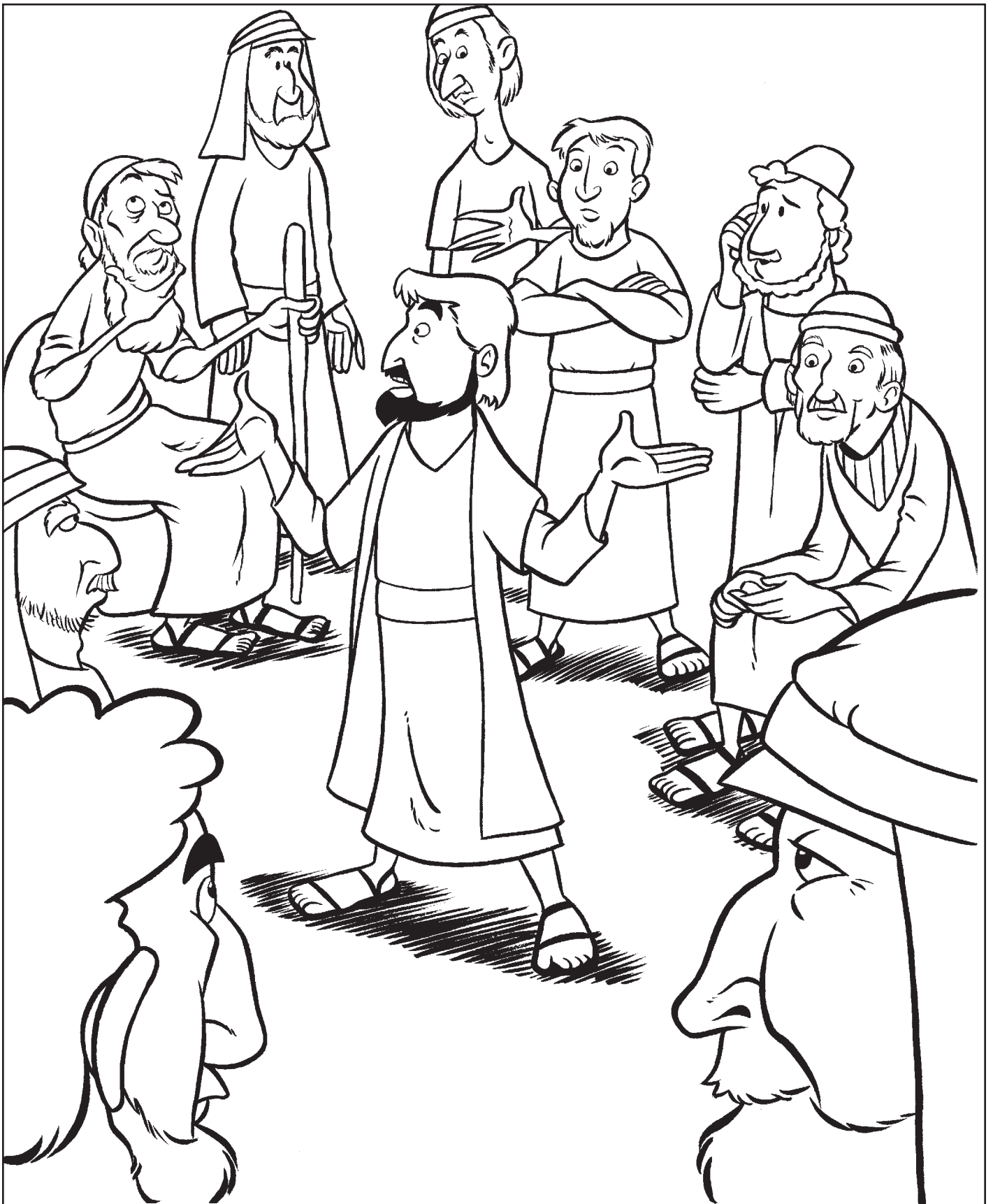
5. Why did James want the the Gentiles to abstain from certain things? _____

6. The Gentiles were saved by _____ alone.



"And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'"

—Acts 15:1



“Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.”

—Acts 15:10–11

