

(Act 15:1) But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

(Act 15:2) And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.

(Act 15:3) So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers.

(Act 15:4) When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them.

(Act 15:5) But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses."

(Act 15:6) The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter.

(Act 15:7) And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

(Act 15:8) And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us,

(Act 15:9) and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.

(Act 15:10) Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

Salvation by works vs. Salvation by grace

(Act 15:11) But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

(Act 15:12) And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

(Act 15:13) After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me.

(Act 15:14) Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name.

(Act 15:15) And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written,

(Act 15:16) "After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it,

(Act 15:17) that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things

(Act 15:18) known from of old.'

(Act 15:19) Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God,

(Act 15:20) but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood.

Before we consider these items that were the catalysts of great joy let's consider the redemptive context of holiness...

(Jas 2:18) But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

(Rom 14:1) As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. (Rom 14:2) One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. (Rom 14:3) Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. (Rom 14:4) Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. (Rom 14:5) One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. (Rom 14:6) The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. (Rom 14:7) For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. (Rom 14:8) For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. (Rom 14:9) For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. (Rom 14:10) Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; (Rom 14:11) for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." (Rom 14:12) So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. (Rom 14:13) Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. (Rom 14:14) I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. (Rom 14:15) For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. (Rom 14:16) So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. (Rom 14:17) For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of

righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Rom 14:18) Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. (Rom 14:19) So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. (Rom 14:20) Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. (Rom 14:21) It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. (Rom 14:22) The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. (Rom 14:23) But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. (Act 15:21) For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues." (Act 15:22) Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers,

(1Co 10:18) Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? (1Co 10:19) What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? (1Co 10:20) No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. (1Co 10:21) You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. (1Co 10:22) Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? (1Co 10:23) "All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. (1Co 10:24) Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. (1Co 10:25) Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. (1Co 10:26) For "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." (1Co 10:27) If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. (1Co 10:28) But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience-- (1Co 10:29) I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience? (1Co 10:30) If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks? (1Co 10:31) So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1Co 10:32) Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, (1Co 10:33) just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.

I. **Things Polluted by Idols**

- a. Concerning this exact theme Paul writes about in 1 Corinthians 8. (1Co 8:6) yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. (1Co 8:7) However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. (1Co 8:8) Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. (1Co 8:9) But take care that this right of yours does not somehow

become a stumbling block to the weak. (1Co 8:10) For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? (1Co 8:11) And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. (1Co 8:12) Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. (1Co 8:13) Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

- b. **Our natural inclination is to drift and give credit to something or someone else for the favor we receive from him, either to ourselves, a program, a strategy, education, upbringing, luck, coincidence, superstition, etc.** (Isa 2:8) Their land is filled with idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made.
- c. **Remember in Egypt they praised the golden calf as their savior...**(Exo 32:8) They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"
- d. **Why is this an issue? Because ONLY ...** (Col 1:15) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (Col 1:16) For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him. (Col 1:17) And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Col 1:18) And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. (Col 1:19) For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, (Col 1:20) and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Col 1:21) And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, (Col 1:22) he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, **There is no other Gospel than the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there is no other means to which people can be saved, there is no other instrument in which you have been rescued. You have not been rescued by good intentions of others, you have not been rescued by fancy speech or good moral living, you have not been brought to the Lord by someone's obedient life or good manners.**

II. **Sexual Immorality**

- a. (Isa 62:5) For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.
- b. (Hos 2:9) Therefore I will take back my grain in its time, and my wine in its season, and I will take away my wool and my flax, which were to cover her nakedness.
- c. (2Co 11:2) For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.
- d. (Eph 5:25) Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. (Eph 5:26) that he might sanctify her, having cleansed

her by the washing of water with the word, (Eph 5:27) so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

- e. (Hos 4:11) whoredom, wine, and new wine, which take away the understanding. (Hos 4:12) My people inquire of a piece of wood, and their walking staff gives them oracles. For a spirit of whoredom has led them astray, and they have left their God to play the whore. (Hos 4:13) They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar, and terebinth, because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters play the whore, and your brides commit adultery.

III. What has been strangled

- a. **πνικτός, πνικτη, πνικτόν (πνίγω), suffocated, strangled: τό πνικτόν (what is strangled, i. e.) an animal deprived of life without shedding its blood,**
- b. (Heb 9:22) Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.
- c. **This was how God had determined to cleanse us of our sin. The soul that sins shall surely die, and to redeem us from that death sentence, a life needed to be offered in its place.**
- d. (Joh 6:53) So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. (Joh 6:54) Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. (Joh 6:55) For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. (Joh 6:56) Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.
- e. (Exo 12:7) "Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. (Exo 12:8) They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. (Exo 12:9) Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. (Exo 12:10) And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. (Exo 12:11) In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover.

IV. From Blood

- a. (Lev 17:11) For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.
- b. (Mat 26:28) for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

(Act 15:23) with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings.

(Act 15:24) Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions,

(Act 15:25) it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

(Act 15:26) men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Act 15:27) We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth.

(Act 15:28) For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements:

(Act 15:29) that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."

(Act 15:30) So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter.

(Act 15:31) And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.

(Act 15:32) And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words.

(Act 15:33) And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brothers to those who had sent them.

(Act 15:35) But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

(Act 15:36) And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are."

(Act 15:37) Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark.

(Act 15:38) But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

(Act 15:39) And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus,

(Act 15:40) but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

(Act 15:41) And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.