

Keep the Gospel Essential and BE Sensitive to NON Essentials

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[0:00] And go to the book of Acts, chapter 15, if you're visiting with us. And you can take that black Bible and the chair in front of you.

And go towards the bat and find page 105. Page 105, you'll find Acts 15. We're going to do these 35 verses.

I think it was most essential to keep it together because of the nature of the message. As you're turning there to Acts 15, again page 105 in that black Bible.

Thanks for praying for us. We went to the conference, Trials and Tribulation and the Goodness of God. We did that Friday and Saturday. Carolyn and Jane, they drove down.

And then Travis and Karen and Tyler, they came down. And then myself, so the six of us, we were all together. Good conference. It was a good conference. Some good preaching. Got to speak with the rock star, Heath Lambert.

[1:11] So appreciated his messages. And I think they're going to be available online too. So if you go to BCTC of AZ, Google that.

You can actually find all the messages. Eventually they'll be online. Acts 15. We'll start reading verse 1 through 35. Verse 35. And some men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, Unless you're circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.

And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders concerning this issue.

Therefore being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren.

When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done among them. But certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees, who I believe stood up saying, is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the law of Moses.

[2:37] And the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, Brethren, 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.

And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us. And He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

Now, therefore, why do you put God to the test? By placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke, which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear.

But, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are. And all the multitude kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul, as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

Verse 13, And after they'd stopped speaking, James answered, saying, Brethren, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first concerned himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name.

[3:51] And with this, the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, After these things I will return, I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen. I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, in order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord.

And all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old. Therefore, it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them, that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication, and from what is strangled them from blood.

For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he has read in the synagogues every Sabbath, 22. And it seemed good to the apostles and the elders with the whole church, to choose men from among them, to send to Antioch with Barnabas, Paul and Barnabas, Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

And they sent this letter by them, the apostles and the brethren, or elders, to the brethren in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia, who are from the Gentiles. Greetings.

Since we heard that some of our number, to whom we give no instruction, have disturbed you with words, unsettling your souls, it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 21] Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word, for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessities, that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication.

If you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell. Verse 30. So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter, and when they read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.

And Judas and Silas also being prophets, themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. And after they had spent time there, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out, chapter verse 35.

But Paul and Barma stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching, with many others also, who were the Lord. Fingerprint readers are now essential.

That was the title of the article. It begins, what once seemed like a gimmick, is now the key to mobile innovation.

[6 : 45] It's been a long time since you could point to a single item on a spec sheet, and say that it distinguishes the latest smartphones from their predecessors. But fingerprint readers are today's exception to that rule.

They draw a clear line of hardware distinction between the phones of the past, and those we'll be using in the future. The fingerprint readers, you put your, read your fingerprint. You have that as a part of your phone now.

You can actually buy that as now a part of your phone. Listen to this, towards the end of the article. For most of this year, fingerprint readers have been a nice extra to have. That situation is rapidly changing.

As Android 6.0 proliferates, and new phones come on the market, uses and implementations of fingerprint ID are going to quickly ramp up in both number and diversity.

It's for this reason that your next phone should, perhaps must, include a fingerprint reader. It is going to now be most essential to have on your phone.

[7 : 53] For security reasons, I guess, people, they have their life on their phone. New purchases on their phone. That's going to be essential, I guess.

I think there's probably other things essential, like food. I mean, call me stupid, but, you know. Water. Wearing clothes, that's probably essential, too.

For some of us more so. We're talking about truth, though. What is really essential?

When we're talking, really, about life. life. And even, let's specify that, life in a local church. What is essential?

What is most essential? What makes or breaks us as a church? Really? What makes us really into a true local church?

[8 : 59] And what breaks us? I mean, you could be a church. I mean, there are churches. Mormon, child witnesses, blah, blah, blah, Roman Catholic, different churches.

But, what makes a true church, and what makes what they do essential? What is the essential ingredient to a church?

Acts, just do it. Be who you are. Let God use us to fulfill His mission. As we step into Acts 15, we see keeping the gospel, that's essential.

But be sensitive to the non-essentials. Keep the gospel essential. The non-essentials, be sensitive to.

But we must keep the gospel essential. This is the thing that makes us or breaks us as a church. Keep the gospel essential.

[10:10] But be sensitive to the non-essentials. Let me give you a statement. In order for us to fulfill God's mission, we must get the good news right and make sure it is most essential.

Everything else is non-essential in comparison to the truth of the gospel. Everything else. Baptism, non-essential. The Lord's Supper, non-essential.

The fact that you watch TV, that's non-essential. You watch sports, non-essential. You watch movies, non-essential. You eat chocolate. It's non-essential.

Suzanne and I, we're going to go in the cry room and cry. Homeschooling, non-essential.

How you dress, non-essential. Music, the type of music you listen to, non-essential. Tattoos, non-essential.

[11:24] Your political party, non-essential. Those things are non-essential when you put it in comparison to the gospel.

The truth of this gospel stands, that is most essential. Everything else is debated. Now, the gospel may, can, could, should, affect those areas of our lives, the areas I just mentioned.

Like chocolate. But it's the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, that makes us right before an absolutely just and righteous God. There is nothing I can do to gain the acceptance of God Almighty.

There's nothing, that's why we sang that song. There's nothing that my hands can do. Having said that, when we do get the gospel right and keep it essential, we will be sensitive to our brethren in regards to those non-essentials, wanting to serve them in love when it comes to music or dress or homeschooling or chocolate, you know, or things like that.

We're able to let the liberties go. The whole church here in our text, specifically with the apostles and the elders.

[13:01] With the whole church. They address a question. At what we'll call the Jerusalem Conference, I hesitate calling it a council because people think of the Council of Nicaea, the Council of Chalcedon, you know, they think of those councils and there was believers there and non-believers there.

And they think that they just kind of kicked these things together and they compare that to Jerusalem. It's not like that. This is signed and sealed, this is it, right here in Acts 15.

If it wasn't for Acts 15, we would, as a mostly Gentile church, we would not be here. And here's the question.

The question that was asked, how are Gentiles supposed to be involved in God's new community? Are they totally equal to Jews? How will law-observing Jewish believers and law-ignoring Gentile believers be united in one church?

One local church? Should Gentiles just ignore God's covenant law? Now, some Jews are like, oh, faith in Jesus, oh, that's fine and dandy, but Gentiles must observe the law.

[14:21] Well, certain standards, criteria you've got to meet now. Well, you're black, so you can't be a part of this church.

Well, you believe in that thing, so you can't, you have tattoos, so you can't, that's what we do. But, salvation comes only through faith alone, by grace alone, in the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

That is the essence of the gospel. That's the distinguishing mark of Christianity. So, in other words, the answer to the question, Gentiles are fully a part of God's kingdom through faith alone, by grace alone, in Jesus Christ alone.

In other words, you don't got to become a Jew. That's a good thing. So, I'm going to split this up into two different parts, keeping the gospel essential, be sensitive to non-essentials, and then what happens is, the church, along with the elders, and the apostles, they send a letter kind of saying the whole thing.

Keep the gospel essential, let's be sensitive to the non-essentials. So, that's kind of the three parts. Keep the gospel essential, sensitive to non-essentials, and then we'll kind of look at it holistically, a summary of the whole thing.

[15:59] And then a couple other things after that. So, let's begin here. Keep the gospel essential. The first point that we see, is faith plus works equals salvation true?

is faith plus works equals salvation true? Yeah, you're already answering the question. No, it's not. But that's the question that comes on hand, which follows through how the Gentiles part of God's new community.

Is it faith plus works? Is that what it is? Because some men, verse 1, it came down from Judea, because it's Judea, Jerusalem's on a mountain, that's why I say it comes down.

They taught the brethren, unless you're circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. And it's just circumcision, because it's like, how do females come into play on this?

Because that's why verse 5 it says, to observe the law of Moses. We'll look at it in a second. So who are these guys? I don't know.

[17:07] They came from Judea. Were they sent kind of by James? Were they maybe connected with James? I don't know if they're sent by James. Whoever they were, they zealously proclaim law keeping for salvation.

They said, if there is no covenant faithfulness to the law of Moses, one simply was not saved. Faith plus works, that's what they're saying.

Verse 2, literally it says, there was no small tension between Paul and Barnabas and these guys. There's no small debate.

It was huge lack of agreement between these guys and Paul and Barnabas. And so the church determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and others to the whole church.

Nail this down once and for all. Get a decision from the apostles themselves who walked with Jesus. The elders that were overseeing and shepherding the church and the whole church, all of them together.

[18:18] Let's nail this down once and for all. That's what they did. Go to verse 4. They were welcomed.

Apostles and elders and the whole church, they welcomed them all. They're so great to see them, but notice in verse 5, certain ones in the sect of the Pharisees, who believed, they said, Gentiles need to be circumcised as well as observe the law of Moses.

Interesting, the wording that's used here, guess what word Luke uses here in verse 5 when it says, they must do it. The word Luke uses is de, d-e-i, delta, epsilon, yoda, they must be circumcised, they must observe the law of Moses.

that is essential. So should Gentiles observe these practices for salvation? It's the law of the requirements for Gentile inclusion into the body of Christ, God's new community.

Is it circumcision plus faith equals salvation? Is that true? True? Friends, you will find that every cult, every religion that comes out of Christianity like Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day of Venice, Roman Catholic Church, they will always say you must trust Jesus.

[19:43] They will say that. But the difference is repent and trust Jesus alone. your merits mean nothing to God.

Nothing! Nothing to God! You cannot get acceptance. I mean the song that we sing, if you would count everything that I've done wrong, who could stand?

but there's forgiveness with you, God. Have mercy on me. Remember I told you about a friend of mine who's a Mormon, and I said to him, you can never gain the acceptance of an absolutely holy almighty God.

He stopped and he squinted. He looked at me and said, wait, what? that throws people off.

Because humans can never gain the acceptance of an absolutely holy, righteous, just awesome, magnificent God.

There's nothing that my hands can do to save my guilty soul. I cannot cleanse my filthy stains or make my spirit whole.

[21:13] For nothing but the blood of Christ can all my sins erase. I dare not claim my righteousness, my good deeds, my good works, the good things I do, well, I'm a good person.

Who cares? God because you're not. You have to be perfect and you're not. I dare not claim my righteousness but I hide within his grace.

Tis Christ who saved me from the depths. God's pardon I've received. I'm washed within his precious blood. My heart is sprinkled clean.

that's the gospel. If you're here and you're not a follower of Jesus you cannot get the acceptance of an absolutely holy God because God's love is conditional.

You will never meet those conditions and he must judge you and condemn you. You know what? He must judge and condemn everybody. But you know what?

[22 : 17] He shows grace and compassion. He's like this is arms are wide open. He says repent and trust in Jesus Christ. I sent him to live on your behalf.

I sent him to die as a substitute for sinners. I brought him back to life for anyone who repents and puts their trust in my eternal son. If you need to talk to me I'd be more than happy to talk to you about what the gospel means.

Respond to Jesus today. Christian, do you have the confidence that you're loved because of Jesus?

Do you have the confidence that I am loved because of Jesus and all these things that are coming into my life God's bringing it because he loves me because he cares for me I am in union with his son and he loves me.

that's the only way he loves you. What's a great truth? Keeping this gospel essential. Back to our text verse 6 and 7.

[23 : 35] When these certain ones from the Pharisees said this the apostle and the elder came together looking to this matter yeah I bet. There was a big debate and keep in mind the whole church was present so maybe there's a few hundred people around and this decision would affect the church in Antioch, would affect the newly planted churches that Paul and Barnabas did, would affect future churches into the 21st, into the 25th, into the 30th century.

Oh my goodness, into the 30th century? That would be crazy. Into the 30th century and beyond should the Lord carry. So the question, faith plus work, salvation true?

No, Gentiles heard and believed the Lord Jesus. Verse 3, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, bringing great joy to all the brethren.

I mean, does it not bring you joy when people respond to the gospel? You're like, yeah! Yeah! I mean, yeah! And then verse 7, Peter stood up and said, brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, what's the choice?

That by my mouth, the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So he's talking about his experience with Cornelius, which by the way is the third time it's made mention in the book of Acts.

[25 : 09] I guess that's kind of important. So the fact that Gentiles were responding to the message of the gospel, it shows it's only through faith alone. And then what happens here is you get testimony.

Actually, four testimonies. Let's see. One, two, three, four. Four testimonies where God himself testifies to the fact that it's by grace alone, through faith alone, and Christ alone. That's it.

God's testimony, his first testimony, that this is true, the Holy Spirit. God gives them the Holy Spirit, verse 8. God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he also did to us.

So God testified to the fact that Gentiles were truly were part of his new community by giving them the gift of the Holy Spirit. The response to Jesus was genuine.

God accepted them. And the testimony to the fact that Gentiles and believing Jews were one is they got the Holy Spirit. So God gave them the Holy Spirit without circumcision, without observing the law.

[26 : 29] God's testimony, number two, a cleansed heart. Verse 9. He made no distinction between us and them cleansing their hearts by faith. He cleansed their hearts too.

Just like he did with Jews. Notice God initiated, God acted, God testified, God directed. So if there's anyone to blame, go blame God. God equally receives Jews or Gentiles.

Anyone who believes it's faith in Jesus Christ alone. So God's first testimony, Holy Spirit, it's only by faith.

God's second testimony, a cleansed heart, it's only by faith alone. And notice what Peter does here. He's the first one to speak. Faith plus works, that's not salvation, that's a burden.

Verse 10. Now therefore, why do you put God to the test? By placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear.

[27:45] If God was the one who did this, why do you want to test him? Why do you want to mess with God? In the spirit to cleanse their hearts? Why do you want to provoke God?

This provoking God to anger, that's going to light of look at what he says. You want to place upon the neck of the disciples.

Notice how he's already calling them Jesus' disciples. This yoke or this burden we couldn't even bear this ourselves.

We couldn't even do this ourselves. You want to put that burden on that? You want to put that yoke on that? The old way is unbearable.

Look, you're challenging God in his ways. That's what Peter is saying. Get what I'm saying though.

[28:47] It's not that the law is evil, wicked, bad. The law is good. It's righteous. It's just. But the law fosters inability.

You cannot meet the demands of the law. It points to you. It says, you're a sinner. You're a sinner. You're a sinner.

You're a sinner. You're a sinner. That's what it does. It does this. It says, you're horrible. You're a failure. That doesn't mean the standard is evil.

The standard is just saying you're a failure. You did not meet this standard. You have Christ who met all those standards, who met all those conditions, who perfectly followed the law on behalf of sinners.

And that righteousness is credited to you. And your evil is credited to Jesus. And then he was crucified for that.

[29:59] And for anyone who repents and put their trust in Jesus, you're free. You're free. That's the essence of the gospel.

Which brings us to this point. The true teaching is only by grace through faith. This is what Peter says. Verse 11. But we believe that we're saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in the same way as they also are.

Isn't it interesting how Peter says it like this too? He didn't say they are saved the same way we are. He doesn't say it like that. He says we are saved the same way they are.

By the grace of the Lord Jesus through faith alone. Look people don't have to become like you to be saved. People don't have to become like you to be saved.

That's where these non-essentials come in. Oh you know you got those piercings. Oh you do this. Oh you like chocolate. Why do you keep bringing that up?

[31:01] That's what we do. We put the standards on there. You don't meet any of the standards. Jesus met all the standards all the conditions.

Now it's only by grace through faith. Notice how Peter emphasized the equality of Jews and Gentiles in Jesus Christ alone. Both experienced God's blessing in Christ.

Jews who keep the law it's a secondary issue. So here Peter speaks says this Peter is no longer in the book of Acts at this point.

He's gone. I already gave you two testimonies two of these by Peter. There's a third testimony signs and wonders because now everybody got quiet of course Peter talking we better shut up now.

And they're listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. They listen third testimony signs and wonders they listen to them recount how God did work among the Gentiles by signs and wonders another indicator that Gentiles were included.

[32:17] you have the Holy Spirit cleansed heart signs and wonders here's a fourth testimony scripture scripture that's the fourth testimony it's only by faith so here you have Peter he's speaking right and then gets everybody to kind of quiet down and then Barnabas and Paul they're speaking well then they stop and then James the pillar a pillar and leader in the Jerusalem church one who represents Jewish Christians spoke in support of Simeon uses his Jewish name related how God first concerned himself verse 14 about taking from among the Gentiles a people for his name put the brakes on whoa time out a people for his name you know where he's getting this from right

Exodus chapter 19 verse 5 where the Lord says you Israel you are a people for my name to display my glory well now James is saying now God has created a new people for himself those from all nations Gentiles are God's people in the full sense that Israel is without having to become Jews God had a promise he was going to do new work is being fulfilled or I'll put it differently in other words God's people are now this new thing the new thing is called the church where Jews and

Gentiles are now one in Christ they're one in Christ Jesus through faith alone by grace alone in Christ alone so notice what James does in 15 and with this the words of the prophets agree agree to

Gentile inclusion and he only quotes Amos chapter 9 verse 11 to 12 he only quotes one but it's what the prophets as a whole spoke about and under the spirit's direction James gives the right understanding of Amos chapter 9 verse 11 and 12 which is what he quotes from after these things I will return rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen rebuild its ruins and restore it verse 17 in order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord that is all the Gentiles who are called by my name says the Lord who makes these things known from of old so scripture is a testing agrees with what's taking place it's the testimony another a fourth testimony well what does this passage mean this quote from Amos God promised David's line would be restored and all the peoples will seek that rebuilt kingdom from that line so God restores

David's line rebuilding his dynasty so that the rest of mankind will seek the Lord and Gentiles will be called by God's name see this rebuilding of David's dynasty it was fulfilled how by Jesus arrival his life his death his resurrection his exaltation it fulfilled it from James what he's saying so Jesus he's begun his rule from heaven on David's throne now benefits can come to Gentiles who are now included through faith Jesus came to allow the rest of humanity not just Jews to seek God what's fulfilled the promise to David but also to Abraham to David there'll be someone who would come on his line but to Abraham in your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed in your seed in Christ not in your good works not in faith and works but in

Christ you'll be blessed so that promise all the way Genesis 12 to Samuel 7 these promises are fulfilled in Jesus he's done it it's fulfilled and now God starts this new thing called ecclesia which is Greek for assembly which we get the Latin word church not this that's a building this people not the chairs either things are uncomfortable anyways back sitting on anyway so going back to our text so it's only by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone they keep repeating this I wonder if they're trying to say something here maybe verse 19 therefore it's my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles do you realize what he's saying here don't trouble them in other words no they don't have to be circumcised no they don't need to follow the law of

[37 : 53] Moses no it's not faith plus works Gentiles who turn to God through faith should not be burdened with the yoke of the law with unnecessary trouble or difficulty the lives that they lived are determined by Jesus and the spirit not the demands of the law it's not under law we're under the law of Christ the spirit is directing us because he lives inside of us that's the new thing that God has done so it's only by grace alone through the means of faith alone in Jesus Christ alone it's that word alone is key so we've looked at keeping the gospel essential keep that gospel truth that is essential that is vital significant most significant no he says be sensitive to the non essentials 20 to 21 but Jane says that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood what is he talking about avoid these four impurities these things are pollutants that pollutes you pollution that comes from idols idol worship certain rituals we look at immorality you say why is that a non essential how can that be a non essential it's the connotation it had with being around pagan temples which the idea was temple prostitution so any connection with immorality with temple prostitution pagan rites things strangled where they eat the blood and they don't drain the blood the blood is not drained from the animal eaten these things are in reference to pagan idolatry and worship that's what he's talking about and for

Jews to eat things strangled with the blood still in it that'd be like eating an oatmeal cookie with raisins in it for us who love chocolate you just don't do that you just don't eat oatmeal with raisins in them it's like wrong what's wrong with you people you're supposed to have chocolate chips in them you don't have raisins in them raisins are for somebody else healthy and stuff like that you eat chocolate right do I hear an amen from be sensitive to these non essentials why for fellowship peace and the show that you've separated yourself from idolatry and from the things that are connected with the way Gentiles used to live was pretty abhorrent because of the connection of idolatrous worship the call is to be faithful to the one true

God be moral in worship and also being sensitive to issues of unclean animals and eating strangled animals without draining the blood in other words be gracious to your Jewish brothers be sensitive to them keep peaceful relations with your Jewish brethren and be careful to have any association

with things that promote idolatry keep yourself away from that you'll do well I'm kind of moving ahead to the letter when James says if you guys do that and the church if you do that you'll do well it would be good for you to separate yourself anything associated with anything promoting idolatry pagan temple stuff like that it's not about so much keeping these laws but about doing these things that could offend their Jewish brethren the idea is respect their practices and their cultural concerns that will lead to peace be gracious on the peripheral issues by the way this also when they do this it serves as a testimony not just to the

Jews which is first and foremost because it's their Jewish brethren but second to non-Christians to non-followers of Jesus because how come he's not hanging out in the pagan temples and everything like that it's a testimony to them let me stop what kind of issues do we have today about stuff like this I gave you some in the beginning dating versus courting drinking alcohol education public education homeschooling sports entertainment do you watch movies do you watch tv what kind of music do you listen to how you dress the kind of things you eat please don't eat oatmeal cookie with raisin in front of me that's just wrong you have to go to confession or something like that anyways tattoos politics your possessions your income or social status minor theological viewpoints baptism lord supper taking psychological medication should you take that should you not take that should you take antidepressants songs we sing in a service should you have a band should you have a guitar should you have a piano should not have any instruments we are saved by grace through faith in

Jesus Christ alone we're together for the gospel but with certain minor non-essential issues we need to show grace and sensitivity for the sake of others we rely upon the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins we rely only upon him true Christian fellowship then it shows grace and differences that are not central to the truth of the gospel and we do that as a way to express love we must never we must never never never compromise the gospel but we must be sensitive to all these other issues outside the gospel as one writer says any teaching that compromises the simple message of the gospel will rob Christians of their assurance and leave them feeling confused end quote that's a good statement it will rob you it robs us of our assurance and we're confused well what's the gospel then

[45 : 35] John Newton said this we must be iron pillars in the essentials and a reed in the non-essentials and friends when the gospel is not compromised then we can show grace and tolerance among the diverse expressions you serve one another in love that's what Paul says in Galatians chapter 5 you serve one another in love Jews can practice the law let them but don't put that on the Gentiles this is a decision by the church by the leadership and by the spirit too so notice how this gets summed up which will kind of go through this part kind of fast keep the gospel essential be sensitive to non-essentials 22 to 29 because it's just basically just reflecting upon what they were discussing it seemed good to the apostles and the whole church notice to serve their Gentile brethren in two ways notice they chose men to send to

Antioch with Paul and Barnabas Judas and Silas leading men among the brethren second they sent this letter so why are they doing this why are they going to do these two things they send in these two guys and they're sending the letter why they wanted to preserve the unity of the church handling diversity with grace discernment and respect so they chose men to accompany Paul and Barnabas and they have two from the Gentile side and two from the Jewish side and notice the letter it's like brother to brother it says apostles brethren elders to the brethren in Antioch who are Gentiles greetings notice they explain the problem we've heard to some of our number to whom we gave no instruction we didn't tell them to do this they've disturbed you or they shook you up they troubled you notice with unsettling or causing inward distress to their souls from these words they didn't send them they overstepped their bounds so it seemed we heard about this so it seemed good to us verse 25 having become of one mind so notice there's unity to select men to send to your with our beloved

Barnabas and Paul interesting how they say this we choose men we're sending them to you because we're telling you we take this seriously and we send them with our beloved Paul Barnabas and Paul to show that we love Barnabas and Paul we love you and we support their position Barnabas and Paul which is what salvation by grace alone through faith alone and Christ alone we support that and notice he says they're dedicated to Christ they've risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ their affirming salvation was by grace alone through faith alone and Christ alone so this list they say this should for the sake of unity you should separate from these things

notice seem good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than this says these essentials really the word means these necessities these things are necessary for you to have peace and unity and preserving that unity together what is it the four abstain from things sacrifice to idols blood things strangled and for fornication if you keep yourselves free from such things you will do well there'll be solid fellowship this is

God's divine guidance we want to lay a burden upon you but keep yourself from associating with idolatry so that we notice he says fellowship would be open with Jewish believers and adhering to this list of four would keep them from compromising with idolatry or immorality these were ways they used to live before they came to Christ so they send the letter they send these guys two closing points there's joyful encouragement yay they're kind of like well we were really nervous about this verse 30 sent away came to Annie out gathered to the congregation they read the letter oh they rejoice because of its encouragement Judas and Silas they were prophets they encouraged the strength the brethren with a lengthy message they were exhorting them they were exhorting the church strengthening the church they were saying to them stay faithful to the gospel it's about trusting in the Lord

Jesus Christ alone and maintaining peace and harmony with the Jewish brethren though we have differences we're united and then notice how then what happens the gospel was affirmed and taught verse 33 they spent a long time they were sent away from the brethren and peace to those who sent them out in other words notice they're cordial they're gracious between the mixed groups Jews with Gentiles there's peace it seems that verse 34 was added later so we will not take it to be part of the original so then moves us into verse 35 Paul and Barnabas stayed notice how they were teaching and proclaiming the gospel affirming the truth of the gospel so last group of questions for you are we making sure the gospel is most essential in this church are we getting it right are we being sensitive to each other so all those peripheral issues

[51:52] I gave you a whole bunch of them what's the peripheral issue that you're getting hung up with you struggle with are we showing grace like God showed his grace to us God has showed his grace to me why can't I show grace in my little chocolate issue you know or but all kidding aside why can't I show grace in the midst of tattoos or smoking or drinking or this or that blah blah blah the gospel must be essential in this church and if I am not making the gospel essential you fire me and get somebody who's going to do it we must hold tenaciously to the gospel by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone we must and then all the other issues we can debate it we can discuss we can go through that and everything it's okay be sensitive and we show grace excuse me

I can be a lack of gracious I can be a lack of my grace too so it's all of us together may God give us grace to show grace this guy's gone long enough take a few moments think pray maybe maybe you want to take a few moments as you ponder we have some few moments of silence maybe you want to pray for us as a church that we would keep the gospel essential maybe you want to pray that God will work in your heart that you be gracious with the non-essentials whatever it is take a few moments or you can just ponder what we've seen in God's word and then we'll do our time of giving our last two songs in closing prayer sit think ponder ponder m letters we'll do that berth in prayer to 20 reading together

Thank you.