

Acts 15:1-21 Make It Easy to Come to God

I. The Story

- A. Someone claimed that circumcision was necessary to be saved.
- B. Peter recalls that God saved Gentiles and they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10-11).
- C. James calls for compromise with 3 prohibitions.
 - 1. No food sacrificed to idols
 - 2. No meat of strangled animals or blood
 - 3. No sexual immorality

II. Reason for James' Requirements

- A. Make peace in the Church between Jewish and Gentile believers
 - Among these, only prohibition of sexual immorality had universal application.
- B. Main Point: "We should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God." (15:19)
 - II Peter 3:8; God wants to save people from sin through repentance.
- C. When it comes to the Gospel, Addition = Subtraction.

III. What Makes It Difficult Today? [question for Home Group discussion]

- A. "They have to come to our church."
 - Yet **we** need our church.*
- B. We do: We're not going to them.
 - 1. Beliefs we borrow from the world
 - I have to "earn the right" to talk about Jesus; contrast Mat 28:18.*
 - 2. Confusion between gift and command
 - Command: e.g., John 15:26-27*
 - 3. Inadequate goals and training
 - End vision: Matthew 24:14*
- C. False perceptions of us in the world
 - 1. We're misunderstood and assumed to be political & prideful.
 - So be extra-humble.*
 - 2. We're responsible to overcome the false perceptions.
 - Ask wise questions.*
 - 3. Recommended: Expand our *oikos* (network of relationships) strategically.